The U.S. Chess Championship, 1845–1985

by
GENE H. McCORMICK
and
GRANDMASTER ANDY SOLTIS

McFarland

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Introduction

To win the championship of one's country—there is something historical about that. The winner establishes his place in chess history, which perhaps some of the U.S. winners are too young to appreciate. —Viktor Korchnoi, to authors

No series of tournaments or matches enjoys the same rich, turbulent history as that of the United States chess championship. It is in many ways unique—and so unappreciated.

In Europe and elsewhere the idea of choosing a national champion came slowly. The first Russian championship tournament, for example, was held in 1889. The Germans did not get around to naming a champion until 1879. The first official Hungarian championship occured in 1906 and the first Dutch, three years later.

But American chess fans knew in 1845 who their champion was—and many nonplayers knew it too because the title match of that year was well publicized. Twelve years later the industrious American organizers mounted their first tournament for a national champion. And that event, New York 1857, was only the fourth true chess tournament ever held.

In its first century and a half, the United States championship has provided entertainment of all kinds. It has introduced new heroes (Paul Morphy in 1857 and Bobby Fischer in 1957) and honored remarkable veterans (Sammy Reshevsky in his late 60s). There have been stunning upsets (Arnold Denker in 1944 and John Grefe in 1973) and marvelous streaks (Fischer's 11–0 result in 1963–64). The championship has seen scandals and swindles, boycotts and brilliancies, bitter controversy and theoretical innovation. The games have been won and lost by geniuses and drunkards, prodigies and émigrés, college dons and coffeehouse hustlers.

It has also been a truly *national* championship. For many years the title tournament was identified with New York. But it has also been held in towns as small as South Fallsburg, N.Y., Mentor, Ohio, and Greenville, Pa. Local fans have witnessed championship play in Boston and Las Vegas, Baltimore and Los Angeles, Lexington, Ky., and El Paso, Texas. The title has been decided in sites as varied as the Sazerac Coffee House in 1845 to the Cincinnati Literary Club, the Automobile Club of Detroit, the auditorium of a fundamentalist Christian college in Pasadena and, in 1984, the Student Union Building of the University of California at Berkeley.

Today when Swiss System open events predominate in America and when super-grandmaster events in Europe attract the chess headlines, the United States championship is often neglected—by players, organizers, and chess fans. This book is intended to remind all of us what championship has been and what it can be.

Chapter One

1845: A Champion Is Crowned

Ninety-nine out of 100 knowledgeable chess players would readily identify the first United States champion as Paul Morphy. And they would be wrong. That 100th player might know the name, but probably nothing else about the first man to win a competition for national supremacy in America. So, to set the record straight—and to appreciate the play and spirit of the times before Morphy—the search for a United States champion begins in 1845.

In the 1840s America was a growing nation but it remained for some time a country of distinct regions. Travel was difficult—the first passenger steam railroad had just been chartered in 1827—and there was little contact between centers of chess activity. The leading center was Philadelphia, and this was demonstrated by a well-publicized trouncing of archrival New York in a postal match by the score of 2–0. The other cities of note were Chicago, Washington, Baltimore, Cincinnati and New Orleans—ranking approximately in that order and each with its own local champion. But none stood higher in national regard than Charles Henry Stanley, the secretary of the New York Chess Club, and Eugene Rousseau, doyen of the New Orleans Chess Club.

Rousseau was a member of a notable French family that in Europe had included assorted artists and poets and the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Eugene had received a thorough grounding in chess in his native Paris at the famous Café de la Régence, a gathering place for the nomads of early 19th century chess. At the Café Rousseau had narrowly lost an enormous 100-game match to the great Livonian gambiteer Lionel Kieseritsky in 1839 and had also played a series of offhand games with Adolf Anderssen, the German schoolteacher and problem composer who would later be hailed as unofficial world champion.

About 1842 Rousseau emigrated to the New World and quickly made a name for himself by defeating Benjamin Oliver and John W.

Schulten in serious matches. This was an achievement. The German-born Schulten was then a New York-based wine merchant whose frequent trips to Paris and Berlin helped him secure games with several of the top Continental players of the day, including the famed Parisians Pierre Saint-Amant, Louis de la Bourdonnais and Arnous de Rivière. A contemporary described Schulten as continually "sleeping and dreaming chess" and, in a career of 30 years of offhand and serious games, he managed to lose brilliantly to just about every great player in the world.

By defeating Schulten and Oliver, Rousseau was soon recognized as the leader of the New Orleans club. The club was then one of the most active and competitive in the country and included a number of talented amateurs including Ernest Morphy, D.A.P. Ford and Charles Le Carpentier. (A number of Rousseau's victims, and Rousseau himself, turn up in the Frances Parkinson Keyes novel, *The Chess Players*.)

Stanley (1819–1901) dominated New York and the North in much the same way that Rousseau ruled New Orleans and the South. Stanley also was an émigré, having arrived from London in 1842 to find work in the British Consulate. This left him plenty of time for chess and he soon gained a national reputation as editor of the first regularly-scheduled newspaper chess column in America. He was also a problem composer (although not a very good one) and publisher of a brief-lived chess magazine.

But he was best known as a player. As a teenager in London, Stanley had frequented the various "divans," or chess clubs, and was considered one of Britain's rising stars when he defeated Howard Staunton, then the acknowledged world champion, in a match at odds. (Staunton gave odds of "pawn and two," meaning he took Black in every game, let Stanley play two moves in a row at the start and played without a king's bishop pawn. Still, Stanley won the match so easily that it was considered a great loss to English chess when he left for America a short time after this match.)

Soon after he arrived in the United States, Stanley found the New York Chess Club, at Barclay Street near Broadway, and defeated everyone there with ease—except Schulten. They eventually played four serious matches, the first three going to Stanley and the last to Schulten. The former Briton also knocked off Charles Vezin (11 wins, seven losses, three draws) and it was clear there was only one other man in America who could match him—the player who also had beaten Schulten: Rousseau.

In an age of sectional rivalry, the North-vs.-South appeal of a Stanley-Rousseau match must have been great. Supporters were able to

drum up $1000 for a winner-take-all contest — an enormous sum in 1845. By contrast, that same $1000 figure was still the top prize in the United States championship of 1960 when it was won by Bobby Fischer.

Match rules were drawn up in the manner of the day: Victory would go to the first man to win 15 games, draws not counting. The games were to take place on Rousseau's home ground at the New Orleans Chess Club in the famous Sazerac Coffee House. There would be no time limit and no strict scheduling of rounds. Both players being gentlemen, it was assumed that no one would abuse the privilege of taking too long for a move, nor would he deny his opponent the opportunity for revenge by refusing to start a second game after the first game of the day had been decided.

The match began December 1, 1845, and quickly caught the attention of the country, much as Fischer–vs.–Boris Spassky would 127 years later. The match rules didn't specify it but it was clear that the winner would, by popular acclaim, be the number one chess player in America, the *champion*. Moreover, to a nation that hadn't taken the game seriously, the 1845 match was something of a breakthrough. It was clearly the first organized chess event of significance in the United States. Until the New Orleans match, chess competition meant casual meetings, usually on a Sunday afternoon in someone's sun parlor and concluded in a single day in the most relaxed of circumstances. But after 1845, chess was regarded as something that men could take seriously.

The Match

That Stanley was the superior player was evidenced by the margin of his victory, 15 wins against just eight losses and eight draws. It is interesting to note that Rousseau developed what has become the standard loser's disclaimer: he was "indisposed." After falling behing 2–0 after the first day's play, Rousseau immediately took ill for several days. He resumed the match December 5th with a game that Stanley also won, which did nothing to cure Rousseau's discomfort. Stanley supports Rousseau's claim of illness in a book the winner compiled, unimaginatively titled *Thirty-One Games at Chess, Comprising the Whole Number of Games Played in a Match Between Mr. Eugene Rousseau, of New Orleans, and Mr. C.H. Stanley, Secretary of the New York Chess Club*. In the introduction, justifying the spotty quality of play, Stanley says, "It must be remembered ... that the thirty-one games now published form the whole number occuring in the late match, and are not, as is usually the case with published games, a mere selection of

the finest specimens of play. It must also be borne in mind that chess players, like the rest of mortality, are subject to occasional ailments, both bodily and mental, which, to a certain degree, will deteriorate from their capabilities of intellectual exertion. For Mr. Rousseau, in particular, allowance should be made on these grounds, it being well known among his acquaintances that on commencement of the very laborious undertaking on which he had embarked, he was still suffering from the effects of a previous indisposition." Priced at 50 cents, Stanley's book was nonetheless a poor seller; it is now the rarest of United States match or tournament books.

Perhaps the most important feature of the match was a contribution to opening theory. In the sixth and 16th games of the match Stanley answered Rousseau's Ruy Lopez (1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 B–N5) with 3 ... P–QR3, the first time the move had been tried in serious, recorded play in the United States. And one of the spectators, barely eye-level with the chess board, was eight-year-old Paul Morphy, who had been taken to the match by his uncle Ernest Morphy, Rousseau's match second. Taking into account Morphy's prodigious memory we can assume he made a mental note of Stanley's third move. Thirteen years later he would use it successfully against Anderssen in the match that would gain for Morphy the recognition as number one in the world—and, incidentally, to establish the opening as "The Morphy Defense." Stanley, on the other hand, lost both of the games in which he introduced 3 ... P–QR3—and soon both he and his contribution to chess theory were forgotten.

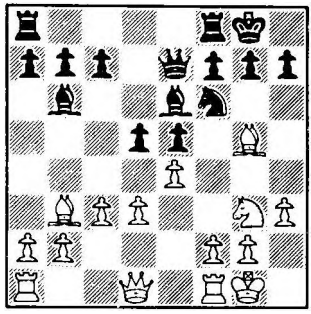
To get the flavor of this historic match we'll examine a few games. Be forewarned: the quality of play is not high, particularly in the openings.

Giuoco Piano
First Match Game, New Orleans, December 1, 1845; *white* Stanley, *black* Rousseau

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 B–B4 N–KB3, 3 N–QB3 B–B4, 4 N–B3 P–Q3, 5 P–KR3?! 0–0, 6 P–Q3 B–K3, 7 B–N3

Typical strategy of the time. Players almost always opened a game with 1 P–K4 in the 1840s and their opponents almost always answered 1 ... P–K4. Then the two sides rushed to get their bishops to the popular diagonals QN3–KB7 and K3–QR7 and maneuver knights to the kingside. Today we see this primitive policy, and the devotion to early P–KR3s, as quaint—but it is the absence of ... P–KR3 that eventually costs Black this game.

7 ... N-B3, 8 N-K2 Q-K2, 9 N-N3 N-Q5, 10 N × N B × N, 11 P-QB3 B-N3, 12 0-0 P-Q4?, 13 B-N5!



After 13 B-N5

Stanley-Rousseau, 1845 (1st)

In the book of the match Stanley writes: "In consequence of the cramped position of the Black queen and knight, White has from this early period, a winning game." The threats are 14 N-R5 and 14 P × P B × P?, 15 B × B.

13 ... P-B3, 14 N-R5 P × P, 15 P × P B × B?, 16 Q-B3!

"Very well played," writes Stanley, who had no lack of modesty. "Nothing can withstand the overwhelming attack which is now developing." Translated into moves, this means 17 B × N P × B, 18 Q-N3*ch* and 19 Q-N7 *mate* is an unstoppable threat.

16 ... B-B5, 17 B × N Q-K3, 18 N × NP!

Much better than 18 Q-N3, which seems to mate after 18 ... P-N3, 19 Q-N5 but allows Black to defend with 19 ... B-Q1.

18 ... B-K7, 19 N × Q B × Q, 20 N × R Black resigns

As poor as Rousseau's play is judged by modern standards, it might compare favorably with some of Stanley's losses. Such as the historic introduction of 3 ... P-QR3:

Ruy Lopez
Sixth Match Game;
***white* Rousseau, *black* Stanley**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 B-N5 P-QR3!?

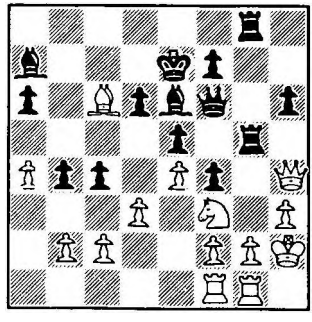
It is safe to assume that after the game Rousseau discussed this last move with his second, Ernest Morphy—as young and impressionable Paul looked on. The move was not totally new: it had been analyzed as early as 1750 by the Italian amateur Ercole del Rio. And it was known that White could not now win a pawn with 4 B × N QP × B, 5 N × P because Black responds 5 ... Q–Q5.

What Stanley can be given credit for is bringing 3 ... P–QR3 into the world of serious chess at a time when the right-thinking masters of the world knew that 3 ... N–B3! or 3 ... B–B4! were the proper moves. What we can't give Stanley credit for, however, is *understanding* 3 ... P–QR3. He used it as a manner of harassing the White bishop, but only succeeded—as he did in this game—in weakening his queenside pawns. It would be Paul Morphy in 1858 who demonstrated the importance of keeping ... P–QN4 in reserve, so that it could be timed accurately for the appropriate point in the late opening.

4 B–R4 P–QN4?, 5 B–N3 N–B3, 6 P–Q3 P–R3, 7 N–B3 B–B4, 8 0–0 P–Q3, 9 B–K3 B–R2, 10 P–KR3 N–K2, 11 P–QR4! P–N5, 12 N–K2 P–B4?, 13 N–R2 P–N4?!

Stanley calls his last move "a bold and effective means of preventing the threatened advance of the KBP." Actually it dangerously compromises a position that he has ruined by locking in his bishop (12 ... B × B!) and refusing to castle. Now the New Yorker must use a coffeehouse-style of attack along the KN file to stay alive.

14 N–N3 N–N3, 14 N–R5 N–B5, 16 B × N NP × B, 17 N × N*ch* Q × N, 18 B–Q5! QR–N1, 19 B–B6*ch*? K–K2!, 20 Q–R5 R–N1, 21 N–B3 B–K3, 22 K–R2 R–KN3, 23 R–KN1 P–B5!, 24 QR–KB1 R(1)–KN1, 25 Q–KR4 R–N4!



After 25 ... R–N4

Rousseau–Stanley, 1845 (6th)

White correctly plays for an exchange of queens but Black finds a tactical way to keep them on the board (26 N × R?? P × N, 27 Q–R5 P–N5 and R–R1 traps the White Q). Now Black threatens to disengage his pieces with 26 ... K–B1 and 27 ... Q–N2.

26 P–N4 K–B1?, 27 R–N2

After this, White re-establishes his positional superiority. Black's golden opportunity was 27 ... P × P*ch*, 28 R × P B × BP!, 28 R × B R × R.

27 ... B–N3, 28 R–Q1 B–Q1, 29 P–Q4! B–K2, 30 P × P P × P, 31 B–Q7! B × B, 32 R × B Q–K3, 33 R–Q5 K–N2

White's penetration along the central files is imminent. Stanley's annotation is quaint: "At this juncture it might appear that Black could, with safety, take the KNP with R; in that case, however, White would play queen rook to Q8*ch* and wins easily." Or as we would put it, if 33 ... R × P then 34 R–Q8*ch* B × R, 35 Q × B*ch* or 34 ... K–N2, 35 Q × R*ch* wins for White.

34 R–N1 Q–KN3, 35 R–K1 R–KR1, 36 R–Q7 Q–K3, 37 R(1)–Q1 R–K1, 38 R(1)–Q5 R–N3, 39 Q–R5 P–B3??

"The object of this move, it would be somewhat difficult to penetrate; it may, however, be in some measure accounted for by the fact of its originator being under the combined influence of calomel and stomach-ache. It is probable that Black's best course of play would be to draw the game by perpetual check on his adversary's queen." This last comment is a bit overoptimistic but Stanley is correct in seeing that 39 ... R–N4! forces White back again because 40 N × R P × N again traps his queen.

40 N–R4! and White won.

If this seems clumsy by modern standards, we'll save you from seeing the second Morphy Defense game, the 16th of the match. In it, Stanley won the exchange on the 18th move, misplayed the endgame horribly, and was lost on the 56th move—when Rousseau left a rook en prise. But Stanley didn't see it and he fully deserved his eventual loss.

In the end it was Stanley by a wide margin: 15 wins to eight. There was no doubt then who was the best American chess player. *The New*

York Courier referred to Stanley as the United States chess champion. So did the *New York Illustrated News, The Family Herald* and *Porter's Spirit of the Times; The [N.Y.] Albion* called Stanley the most skillful amateur on the continent. And in the book of the First American Chess Congress (1857), chess historian Daniel Fiske recognizes that Stanley was "for many years the champion of America." He was, in fact, the first.

Before we leave Stanley we should mention an event even more obscure than the New Orleans match of 1845. This was, in effect, the first defense of the United States championship title. But at the time it was called simply "The Great Match."

In 1847 Stanley issued a challenge to any player in England (with the exception of Staunton, whom he still held in the highest regard). There were no takers and Stanley contented himself by meeting whatever visiting master that the great transatlantic sailing vessels brought to New York. He met Johann Lowenthal and Saint-Amant on equal terms in casual games but revived his serious approach to the game only once after 1845. This occured when he was challenged by J.H. Turner, a gentleman farmer from Mount Sterling, Kentucky, whom Lowenthal, a visiting Hungarian master, described as an amateur "of great natural talent and strong imagination, but somewhat too liable to be carried away by a brilliant combination or a dashing coup."

Turner's vivid imagination led him to believe he had discovered an invincible variation of the King's Gambit and that by using it against Stanley he would win at least half the games of the match. In this he resembled another gentleman farmer of another era: Weaver Adams of Dedham, Mass., who in the 1930s and '40s tried to prove his claim that White always wins by force if he plays the correct line in the Bishop's Opening. A master of considerable talent, Adams failed in several bids to win the United States championship although he did take the 1948 U.S. Open title.

For Turner's challenge another $1000 stake was arranged, with victory going to the first player to score 11 wins. The "Great Match" took 17 games but only four days (February 11–14, 1850) to complete. Contrast that with the 18-game world championship match between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi in 1981 that took six weeks and was considered unnaturally brief.

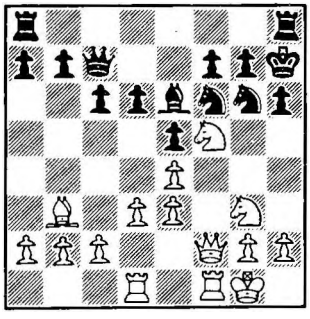
Unfortunately for Turner, his invincible King's Gambit was refuted in the first game he got to use it. Stanley went on to win five games and concede one draw in the first few sessions of play and then coasted to victory (11 wins, five losses, one draw). Here is one of the less flawed games:

Vienna Game
"The Great Match," Washington, D.C., February 1850;
white Stanley, *black* Turner

1 P-K4, P-K4, 2 B-B4 N-KB3, 3 N-QB3 B-B4, 4 N-B3 P-Q3, 5 P-Q3 P-KR3?!, 6 B-K3 B-N3, 7 N-K2 B-K3, 8 B-N3 P-B3, 9 N-N3

Neither player wants to exchange bishops and open a file for the enemy. Stanley liked his position: "White's game is now well opened, and his position very commanding, his forces being so concentrated that they are alike available for the purposes of attack or defense."

9 ... QN-Q2, 10 0-0 0-0, 11 Q-K2 R-K1, 12 QR-Q1 Q-B2?!, 13 N-R4! N-B1, 14 N(4)-B5 N-N3, 15 Q-Q2 B(N) × B, 16 P × B K-R2, 17 Q-B2 R-R1?



After 17 ... R-R1

Stanley-White, 1850

"This does not give relief where the shoe pinches," writes Stanley. "Black's position was critical even prior to this move: but now this case is quite hopeless." Little better was 17 ... N-N1 because of 18 N-R5!

18 N × NP! N-N5, 19 N × B!

The move Black overlooked (19 ... N × Q, 20 N × Q). He could resign here.

19 ... P × N, 20 Q-B7*ch* Q × Q, 21 R × Q*ch* K-N1, 22 B × P R-K1, 23 R-K7*ch* K-B1; 24 R × R*ch* K × R, 25 B × N Black resigns

With no further chess worlds to conquer, Stanley's enthusiasm for the game began to wane and his level of play atrophied from near total neglect and from what soon developed into a serious drinking problem.

His contemporary Fiske noted the champion's weakness for the bottle: "While we must admire the extent and success of his achievements, both as a practicioner and as an author, we cannot repress a sense of regret that an intellect so eminently fitted by inherent genius and careful culture for greater results should have so feebly resisted the terrible ravages of a melancholy intemperantia bibendi." Fred Reinfeld, a historian of more recent vintage, was more succinct, referring to the first champion as "Stanley the drunkard."

For whatever reasons, he was a shell of his former self when he decided to enter the First American Chess Congress Tournament of 1857. Stanley's attempt at a comeback was aborted quickly when he was ignominiously eliminated by a fellow New Yorker, Theodor Lichtenhein, in the very first round of the knockout event. (Lichtenhein, however, was no slouch: he finished third in the event, losing only to Paul Morphy.)

The full extent of Stanley's decline was apparent when, at the end of the tournament, Morphy played a short match with him at odds of "pawn and move"—and beat him 4½–½. There was a stake of $100 riding on the match outcome, but Morphy sent it to Stanley's wife because, as a friend said, "Stanley would have drunk it all up, but now his wife and children will be benefited by the money." The Stanleys had a daughter about that time and the father, who lost a title to Morphy, paid him a different kind of compliment. The baby girl was named Pauline, in honor of his successor as United States champion.

Chapter Two
1857: Paul Morphy

In January 1857 a former postmaster of Philadelphia by the name of Hardman Phillips Montgomery wrote to his friend Daniel Fiske, a professor of languages at Cornell University who also happened to share his love for the game of chess. Montgomery, a pretty fair amateur player, wanted to stage a team match between the three best players of the then-dominant New York and Philadelphia clubs. But Fiske had a better idea.

What Fiske proposed was a National Chess Congress, a sort of convention of fans from across the country. The Congress would serve several purposes: Players could agree on a standard set of rules—an important step because rules often varied from city to city in those days. Also, the Congress could lay the groundwork for a national association of chess enthusiasts to promote the game. And most important, Fiske wrote back to Montgomery, the Congress would be the setting for a major tournament, in fact the first true tournament to be held in the New World.

The "National Tournament" as it was originally called, captured the imagination of Montgomery and other well-placed chess organizers. They appreciated the need for *an event*. The enthusiasm built up from the Stanley–Rousseau match had long since dissipated and American chess had sunk, in Fiske's words, to "one of those periodical fits of inaction to which every art and pursuit are subject." There was only one regular newspaper column on the game to be read in 1857 and Stanley's magazine had been discontinued. (Stanley himself had lost his sinecure at the British Consulate in a minor diplomatic scandal.) There was simply no chess activity outside of occasional club get-togethers.

Fiske—citing the impact on British chess of the impressive London invitational tournament six years before—went into a whirlwind of activity. With the aid of the New York Chess Club he formed committees, helped raise money and won consent from Montgomery and his allies to

have the Congress held in New York. He then went about inviting the best known players of the day, identifying them largely by word of mouth. Firming up the tournament was not easy because several players were reluctant to travel several hundred miles to New York in October just for a chess tournament, and the event was eventually scaled down from its proposed 32 players to 16.

Nevertheless it was an impressive event when play began October 6, 1857, in a large apartment complex known as Descombe Rooms at 764 Broadway. Today the site is occupied by a commercial bank a few blocks from the campus of New York University, but a century and a quarter ago it housed a neatly appointed private room that a contemporary wrote had been fixed up for chess so that it "excited general admiration."

It is worth describing that first playing hall in some detail. It was 80 feet long with a raised platform at one end, over which hung a bust of Benjamin Franklin, "the first known chess player and chess writer of the New World." Along each wall were suspended flags. There was the French tricolor, adorned with the name of the strongest Frenchman of the first half of the century, Louis Charles Mahe de la Bourdonnais. This was followed by the English banner of St. George, bearing the name of la Bourdonnais' noted rival and unsuccessful opponent in a highly publicized match in 1834, Alexander McDonnell. After that came the German flag of Berlin master Paul Rudolf von Bilguer, the Italian flag of the 18th century theoretician Ercole del Rio, the Neapolitan banner representing another early writer, Alessandro Salvio, the Portuguese flag for the 16th century analyst Damiano, the Hungarian flag saluting master Josef Szen and even a Turkish flag for the influential Syrian master Phillippe Stamma. And, of course, there were American flags at the foot of the hall as well as busts and banners for all sorts of famous European players known only in the U.S. through their published games.

The tournament was organized along the lines of the London tournament of 1851, under the so-called knockout rules. This meant that players would be paired randomly with one another for a series of mini-matches. In the first round, for example, the first player in each match to win three games would advance to the next round. His defeated opponent would be eliminated. (Round robin tournaments, in which each player eventually is paired with every other, were not introduced into America until the 1870s.)

The 16 invitees sat down that first day at two rows of marble-topped tables that extended through the playing hall, each with large inlaid chess boards and Staunton design pieces. The contestants seemed to possess a certain gentility that was in keeping with their surroundings.

None could by any stretch of the imagination be considered a chess professional: Paul Morphy, for example, was fresh out of school and was waiting to come of age so he could begin a law practice; Louis Paulsen was an Iowa tobacco broker; James Thompson was a London-born restaurant owner whose love for the game had led him to organize the New York Chess Club 18 years before; Theodor Lichtenhein was a 28-year-old Prussian immigrant who had studied medicine at one time but in 1857 was a leading New York merchant; Alexander Meek had been attorney general of the southern district of Alabama and was then a judge; and Napoleon Marache, who had the distinction of learning the game late in life—at 26—but claimed to have given his teacher rook odds after three weeks of instruction, was a French-born laborer.

Also, there was Frederick Perrin, a modern languages professor at Princeton and later a prominent New York banker; Dr. B.I. Raphael, a practicing surgeon formerly of London, Paris and Kentucky; and William James Appleton, perhaps the most interesting of the group. He had attended Harvard and then set sail for a life of adventure with a series of trips on whaling ships and cargo runs around Cape Horn, and learning the intricacies of hot-air ballooning, before settling down to make money as a New York lawyer. Quite a remarkable group.

Pairings throughout the tournament were drawn by chance, and there were few surprises in the first round: Paulsen eliminated S.R. Calthrop of Bridgeport, Conn., in three straight games; Morphy easily beat Thompson 3–0; Dr. Raphael had a rougher time, winning 3–2 from H. Kennicott of Chicago; Judge Meek scored 3–2 to oust W.J.A. Fuller; Lichtenhein won from Stanley by the same 3–2 score as did Marache over Fiske. The games reflected the openings then popular, with plenty of Scotch Gambits, King's Bishop Gambits, Giuoco Pianos, Evans Gambits and what was called a "Center Counter Gambit in the Knight's Game." This was the third game of the Calthrop–Paulsen pairing and it ended shortly after 1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 P–Q4, 3 P × P P–K5, 4 B–N5*ch*?? P–B3! when Black won a piece. There were no major upsets in the second round either. Paulsen beat Montgomery twice and the latter then went home to Philadelphia. Dr. Raphael narrowly knocked off Marache 3–2 while Morphy and Lichtenhein were disposing of Judge Meek and Perrin by 3–0 shutouts. But there was something to mark the Meek–Morphy match. The Judge, then one of the South's strongest players, had met Morphy ten times before and had lost all ten games. Duly impressed, he predicted the Louisianan would win the tournament, but he prepared a bit of psychology to stop him. If Morphy had a weakness, Meek knew, it was in closed positions. So he deliberately chose an inferior, offbeat version of the French Defense.

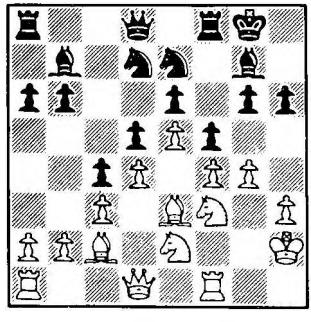
French Defense
Second Round, Second Game, October 16, 1857; *white* Morphy, *black* Meek

1 P-K4 P-K3, 2 P-Q4 P-KN3!?, 3 B-Q3 B-N2, 4 B-K3 N-K2, 5 N-K2?! P-QN3, 6 N-Q2 B-N2, 7 0-0 P-Q4?

The tournament book blamed Black's loss on his second move (instead of the orthodox 2 ... P-Q4) and his 13th move ("a waste of time"). Actually Black's choice of opening is astute when one understands Morphy's preference for wide-open positions and "book" openings. Had Black continued 7 ... P-Q3 and then struck at the center later on he might have enjoyed the middle game. For example, 8 P-QB3 0-0, 9 P-KB4 N-Q2 is not unpleasant for him (10 Q-B2 P-QB4 or 10 P-B5 KP × P, 11 P × P N-Q4!).

8 P-K5 0-0, 9 P-KB4 P-KB4, 10 P-KR3!? N-Q2, 11 K-R2 P-B4, 12 P-B3 P-B5, 13 B-QB2 P-QR3, 14 N-B3 P-R3, 15 P-KN4

The attack on the base of the enemy pawn chains is a common theme nowadays and we can see Black preparing ... P-QN4 here while White gets P-KN4. But in Morphy's day the tournament book had to express support for 15 P-KN4 by adding: "Perfectly safe, and in our opinion, the best move on the board. It is too much the fashion to denounce this move as risky."



After 15 P-KN4

Morphy–Meek, 1857

15 ... K-R2, 16 R-KN1 R-KN1, 17 Q-K1 N-QB3, 18 N-R4 Q-KB1, 19 N × NP!

A fairly simple combination that strips Black's kingside of all serious protection. Had Black left his knight on K2 White would have won by doubling rooks on the KN file.

19 ... K × N, 20 P × P*ch* K–B2, 21 P × P*ch* K × P, 22 P–B5*ch* K–K2, 23 Q–R4*ch*! K–K1, 24 P–B6! B × P, 25 P × B R × R, 26 R × R N × BP, 27 B–N6*ch* K–Q2, 28 B–B5*ch* K–K1, 29 B × P Q–R1, 30 R–N7 N–KN1

And, in the fashion of the day, Morphy "announced mate in three"—meaning 31 B–N6*ch* K–B1, 32 Q–B4*ch* and mate next move.

Luck-of-the-draw pairings matched Morphy against Lichtenhein and Paulsen against Dr. Raphael in the third, or semifinal, round. Lichtenhein put up a good fight, as could be expected of the best New York player of his time. He was known for a stodgy style "more remarkable for its soundness than its brilliancy" and characterized by "careful analysis ... and certain maneuvering of his forces," according to a contemporary, who said Lichtenhein was very reminiscent of "the great German masters." This should not have been a surprise since Lichtenhein had been an officer in the Prussian army before arriving in the United States five years before.

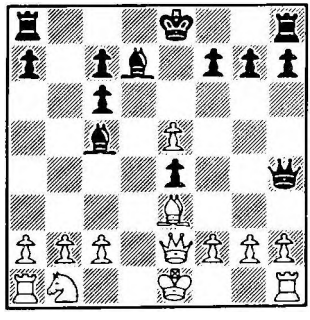
Still, he managed only one draw from Morphy, who played his first truly brilliant game of the tournament:

Two Knights Defense
Semifinals, First game, October 22, 1857;
***white* Lichtenhein, *black* Morphy**

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 B–QB4 N–B3, 5 P–K5 P–Q4!, 6 B–QN5 N–K5, 7 N × P B–Q2, 8 N × N?

Today this variation, usually reached by way of 3 B–B4 N–B3, 4 P–Q4 P × P, is considered positionally solid for White after 8 B × N! and a rapid P–KB4–5.

8 ... P × N, 9 B–Q3 B–QB4!, 10 B × N Q–R5!, 11 Q–K2 P × B, 12 B–K3



After 12 B–K3

Lichtenhein–Morphy, 1857

If White trades off the dark-squared bishops and castles he will have a structurally superior game. Remarkably enough, however, Morphy now has a forced win.

12 ... B-KN5!, 13 Q-B4 B × B!!, 14 P-KN3

White can win two rooks with 14 Q × QBP*ch* B-Q2, 15 Q × R*ch* K-K2, 16 Q × R but he gets mated by 16 ... Q × BP*ch* and 17 ... B-N5. Lichtenhein, a fair calculater, may have seen the in-between move 16 P-KN3! in that line but rejected it because of 16 ... B × P*ch*!, 17 K × B P-K6*ch*, 18 K-K1 Q-N5*ch* and wins.

14 ... Q-Q1!, 15 P × B Q-Q8*ch*, 16 K-B2 Q-B6*ch*, 17 K-N1 B-R6!, 18 Q × QBP*ch* K-B1!, 19 Q × R*ch* K-K2 and White resigns.

Paulsen, meanwhile, was disposing of Dr. Raphael easily and that set up the final match that everyone had expected. It was to be Morphy with his dazzling style and score of nine wins and one draw versus Paulsen the plodder with eight wins and one draw. The latter's brilliance shone in a different setting: Before the final match Paulsen gave two simultaneous blindfold exhibitions with a total of nine games. Morphy was convinced to play one of the boards against Paulsen—and achieved the only win, playing blindfolded himself.

The special rules for the tournament finals called for five victories, draws not counting. At first Paulsen seemed to be the one who could solve the Morphy puzzle. After four games they had each scored one win and two draws. But Morphy was inwardly seething at Paulsen's slow play. According to one account, the young Louisianan had tears of frustration rolling down his face at the conclusion of the interminable second game, which took 15 hours to reach 56 moves.

But this was Paulsen's style. He had come to America from his native Germany at age 20, following in a brother's footsteps, and had settled in Dubuque, Iowa, as a wholesale produce seller. He had already been seen as a talented master in Europe but gave his first indications of depth in the United States. Paulsen was, in fact, the first American to deeply understand closed positions and the first opening theoretician in the States. (He was the first to analyze the Goring Gambit, for example, and did it in the pages of a Chicago newspaper shortly after this tournament.) Later he returned to Europe and beat many of the top players of the day, winning matches from Ignaz Kolisch of Poland and Adolf Anderssen and taking first prizes in strong tournaments from 1861 (at Bristol, England) to 1880 (Brunswick, Germany). He never lost a match

and appears to have abandoned tournament play only because of the introduction of chess clocks.

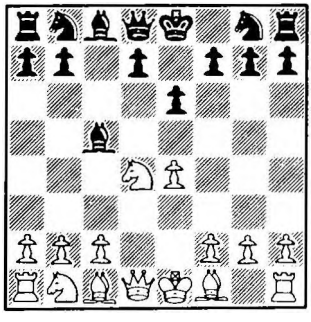
But there were no clocks in use in 1857 and no time limits. While Morphy rarely took more than five minutes per move, Paulsen consumed 75, 49, 41, 36, 35 and 27 minutes on different moves during one of his games from the final match. It was because of this that Morphy vowed after the fourth game to end matters as quickly as possible. He proceeded to win four games in a row and end the first national championship tournament with a flourish. We'll examine two key games:

Sicilian Defense
Finals, First Game, October 29, 1857;
***white* Morphy, *black* Paulsen**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 P-Q4 P × P

Morphy later switched to 2 N-KB3 P-K3, 3 P-Q4, which makes little difference unless Black tries to hold onto the pawn here with 3 N-KB3 P-K4. Even in 1857 they knew that 4 N × KP?? would lose to 4 ... Q-R4*ch*. But they also knew that 4 P-B3! P × P, 5 N × P was an excellent gambit for White.

3 N-KB3 P-K3, 4 N × P B-B4!?



After 4 ... B-B4

Morphy-Paulsen, 1857 (1st)

Paulsen also tried 4 ... N-QB3 and 4 ... P-QR3 on occasion, anticipating the modern European masters by a century. The move Black adopts was widely denounced as "foolhardy," and worse, for many years. But as so often happens, it was not the merits of 4 ... B-B4 that were weighed by the annotators—it was Paulsen's sloppy play later. Only in 1972(!), when this opening system was successfully revived by British master Michael Basman, was this move appreciated.

5 N-N3

In a later match game Morphy played 5 B-K3 (threatening 6 N × P) and was rewarded by Paulsen's 5 ... Q-N3, 6 N-QB3 Q × P?? after which 7 N(4)-N5! wins by force because of the threats of 8 B × B, 8 N-B7*ch* and, worst of all, 8 R-QN1! But 6 ... N-QB3! is a simple improvement of Basman's that should equalize and may even draw immediately (7 N-QR4 Q-R4*ch*, 8 N-B3 Q-N3) as Basman pointed out in a playoff for the British championship in 1973. For Paulsen it was exoneration — but four generations too late.

5 ... B-N3, 6 N-B3 N-K2, 7 B-KB4!

White can also take advantage of ... N-K2 by playing Q-R5 at some point, since Black's knight cannot go back to KB3. But Morphy's plan is simplier — and clearly superior to 7 B-KN5 0-0, 8 B-K2 P-B4, 9 P × P? B × P*ch*! as played in another 1973 Basman game. The point of Morphy's move is to occupy Q6 with a piece and meet ... P-B4 with P-K5. Paulsen's system doesn't work well if B-Q6 is played and this is why 7 ... P-Q4 is essential. (Later in the match Paulsen varied with 6 ... N-QB3, 7 B-KB4 P-K4?! giving Morphy another hole, at his Q5.)

7 ... 0-0?, 8 B-Q6 P-B4?!, 9 P-K5 P-QR3, 10 B-K2 QN-B3, 11 0-0 R-B2, 12 K-R1

What Basman could not revive in 1973 or thereafter was the positional viability of such a crippled shell of a game. Morphy has taken all the right precautions (12 ... N-N3, 13 P-B4!) to enable him to take over the middlegame with either a slow buildup of P-KN4 or a gradual enlarging of pressure in the center (Q-K1, QR-Q1, N-Q2-B4).

Paulsen could appreciate a lost position when he saw one and now took steps to confuse the enemy with a direct attack on the KP.

12 ... P-B5?!, 13 N-K4 N-B4, 14 B-R5! P-N3, 15 B-KN4

After this, Morphy can occupy KB6 at will, another major concession. All he needs to win is an open file.

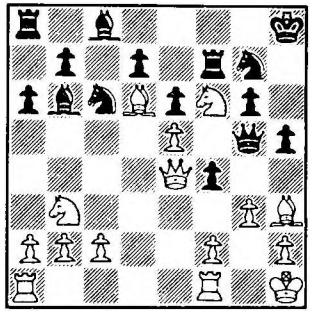
15 ... N-N2, 16 Q-B3 P-KR4

Paulsen could also play incomprehensible moves on occasion. This virtually abandons all hope of successful defense on the kingside. But he has an idea ...

17 B–KR3 Q–R5

... which he immediately drops. Why didn't Paulsen continue with 17 ... P–N4, the move he presumably prepared? The answer is that Morphy could safely sacrifice after 18 P–N3 P–N5, 19 B × P P × B, 20 Q × NP, e.g. 20 ... P–B6, 21 QN–Q2 N–Q5, 22 P–B3 QN–B4, 23 N × BP and White's pieces begin to take over on the kingside.

18 N–B6*ch* K–R1, 19 Q–K4 Q–N4, 20 P–N3!



After 20 P–N3

Morphy–Paulsen, 1857 (1st)

Morphy understood instinctively where his advantage lay and where he could inflict the quickest damage (20 ... P × P, 21 BP × P N–B4 could be met by 22 R–B4 followed by 23 QR–KB1 and preparations for P–KN4.)

20 ... P–B6!?, 21 N–Q2!

The knight was not doing anything on QN3 and is immune here (21 ... Q × N, 22 Q × P.)

21 ... B–Q1, 22 N × BP Q–R3, 23 R–KN1! B × N, 24 P × B

White is ready to make the final push with P–KN4. For instance, 24 ... R × P, 25 P–KN4 P × P, 26 R × P N–B4, 27 B–K5 and eventually penetration along the KN file with QR–KN1.

24 ... N–K1, 25 B–B4 N × P

The position has been lost for several moves, but this makes it clear even to the passersby on East 8th Street. The choices for Paulsen were (a) losing a piece with 25 ... N × P, (b) conceding he was hopeless with 25 ... Q–R2, 26 N–N5, or (c) resigning.

26 Q × N! Q × B, 27 Q × B*ch*!

A simple desperado device: White makes the last capture and remains a piece ahead. Characteristically, Morphy finishes off with a mating attack:

27 ... R × Q, 28 P × Q R × P, 29 QR–QB1! R × BP, 30 R–B8*ch* N–N1, 31 N–K5 R–N2, 32 N × P*ch* K–R2, 33 N–B8*ch* K–R3, 34 N × QP R × N, 35 R/8 × N R × BP, 39 B × P R–K2

Here Morphy announced a mate in four moves: 37 R/8–N6*ch* K–R2, 38 B–N8*ch* K–R1, 39 R–R6*ch*, etc. The game lasted 5½ hours, of which Paulsen consumed more than 5 hours.

Then came the flawed, sloppy little game that made Morphy famous. "Just before this game," recalled Fuller, a fellow competitor who was also a chess columnist, "Morphy went down to the restaurant with me and took a glass of sherry and a bisquit. His patience was worn out by the great length of time Paulsen took for each move. His usually equable temper was so disturbed that he clenched his fist and said: 'Paulsen shall never win another game from me while he lives.' "And he never did," added Fuller.

Four Knights Game
Finals, Sixth Game, November 8, 1857;
***white* Paulsen, *black* Morphy**

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 N–B3 N–B3, 4 B–N5 B–B4?!

This is the most natural move order and the one most often given for this game. Paulsen selects a Four Knights' Game and Morphy defends with the rare offshoot, 4 ... B–B4. But did this really happen?

Early chess history is filled with questionable moves—not just bad ones, but imaginary ones—and it is often impossible to tell what really happened. Max Lange, for example, would appear to be a good source. The great German master and fan of Morphy's was getting the moves second-hand but gave this move order: 1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–QB3 N–QB3, 3 N–B3 B–B4, 4 B–N5 N–B3.

Who knows?

5 0-0!

A good move, which prepares 6 N × P N × N, 7 P–Q4 without risking 5 N × P N × N, 6 P–Q4 B–N5, 7 P × N N × P.

5 ... 0-0

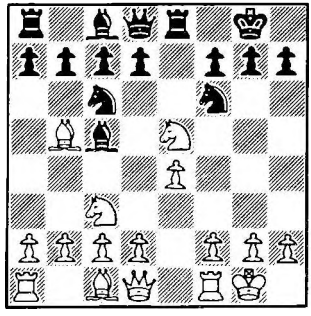
Now 5 ... P–Q3 would have avoided the favorable simplification that follows but would have allowed 6 P–Q4 P × P, 7 N × P B–Q2, 8 N–B5! with a fine game. We know now that Morphy is getting into trouble here. But let's see how the contemporary analysts viewed the game.

6 N × P!

After this Black has to work very carefully to avoid a passive game. Lowenthal says of 6 N × P "We cannot favorably incline to this move; it allows the second player to develop his game while that of the attacking party is cramped." But he misevaluated the consequences of what happens next.

6 ... R–K1

"6 ... Knight takes knight, instead, would have been advantageously replied to with 7 P–Q4," is the way Lange put it and he was right (7 ... B–Q3, 8 P–B4! N–B3, 9 P–K5 B–N5, 10 P–Q5!). "The correct reply," added Lowenthal, about Morphy's sixth move. But Steinitz, coming several years later, suggested the superior 6 ... N–Q5 after which 7 B–K2 can be met by 7 ... R–K1, 8 N–B3 N × P when Black is only slightly worse (9 KN × N B × N, 10 N × N R × N, 11 P–QB3 and 12 P–Q4).



After 6 ... R–K1

Paulsen–Morphy, 1857 (6th)

7 N × N?

"The advantage of the pawn might have been retained by the playing of the knight to Q3," was Lowenthal's Victorian-style annotation. "But this would have given him for some time a constrained position,

and the move was prudently rejected." True, but 7 N–B3! was quite good and enough for an advantage after 7 ... N × P, 8 P–Q4. Note that 7 N–B3 N–Q5 would not be accurate because of 8 P–K5! (8 ... N × N*ch*, 9 P × N! P–QB3, 10 P × N P × B, 11 P–Q4, or 9 ... R × P?, 10 P–Q4).

7 ... QP × N, 8 B–B4 P–QN4?!

Black couldn't get the pawn back immediately (8 ... N × P is met by 9 N × N R × N, 10 B × P*ch*! K × B, 11 Q–B3*ch*) but he could have secured a very good game with 8 ... N–N5! which threatens 9 ... Q–R5. The main point is that 9 P–KR3 can be met by a double capture on KB7 and 11 ... Q–Q5*ch*, picking up the bishop.

9 B–K2 N × P

He gets the pawn back but this required deeper calculation than it seems. Modern players fail to appreciate that this highly romanticized and enormously popular game was also played in a competitive situation. The score stood only 2–1 in Morphy's favor and the issue was very much in doubt. One slip might have turned the tide of the championship finals.

Fortunately, Morphy has calculated that 10 B–B3, which appears to favor White, can be met by 10 ... N × BP!, 11 R × N Q–Q5 winning outright (12 N–K4 R × N!, 13 B × R Q × R*ch*, 14 K–R1 B–KN5, 15 B–B3 R–K1! or 12 Q–B1 Q × R*ch*, 13 Q × Q R–K8 *mate*.)

10 N × N R × N, 11 B–B3? R–K3

Paulsen had probably visualized a position with a bishop on KB3 and pawns on QB3 and Q4 when he played 7 N × N, and he would have been right in evaluating it as favorable. But he makes a slight error in sequence that ends up deciding a national championship. Morphy never looked back after this error.

12 P–B3? Q–Q6!!

Suddenly Black has a chokehold on the enemy position. Without P–Q4 White cannot develop his pieces normally and Black has time for a tactical exploitation of the kingside. How long might Paulsen have thought about 12 P–B3? An hour? How long might Morphy have thought about 12 ... Q–Q6—a minute?

13 P-QN4 B-N3, 14 P-QR4

Lowenthal recommended B-N4 around this point, such as 14 B-N4 P-KB4, 15 Q-B3! to break the chokehold. But Paulsen had already figured out another way of developing his queenside.

14 ... P × P, 15 Q × P B-Q2

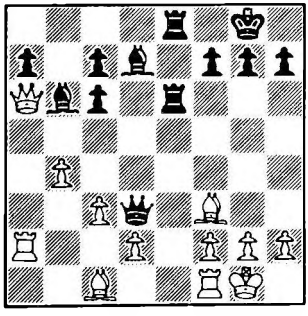
There are two other good moves here. One is 15 ... P-QR4 with the idea of 16 ... Q × R*ch*!, 17 K × Q B-R3*ch*. The other good try is 15 ... B-N2, which would have stopped White from trying to break the chokehold with 16 Q-R6.

16 R-R2 QR-K1!

Now this threatens mate by sacrificing the queen for the KR. The best defense is 17 Q-Q1 but the chokehold remains firm after 17 ... P-QB4, 18 P-N5 P-B5.

17 Q-R6?

Too late. "White cannot be blamed for not seeing the most wonderful combination that the opponent had prepared," wrote Steinitz, who used this position on the cover of his *Modern Chess Instructor*.



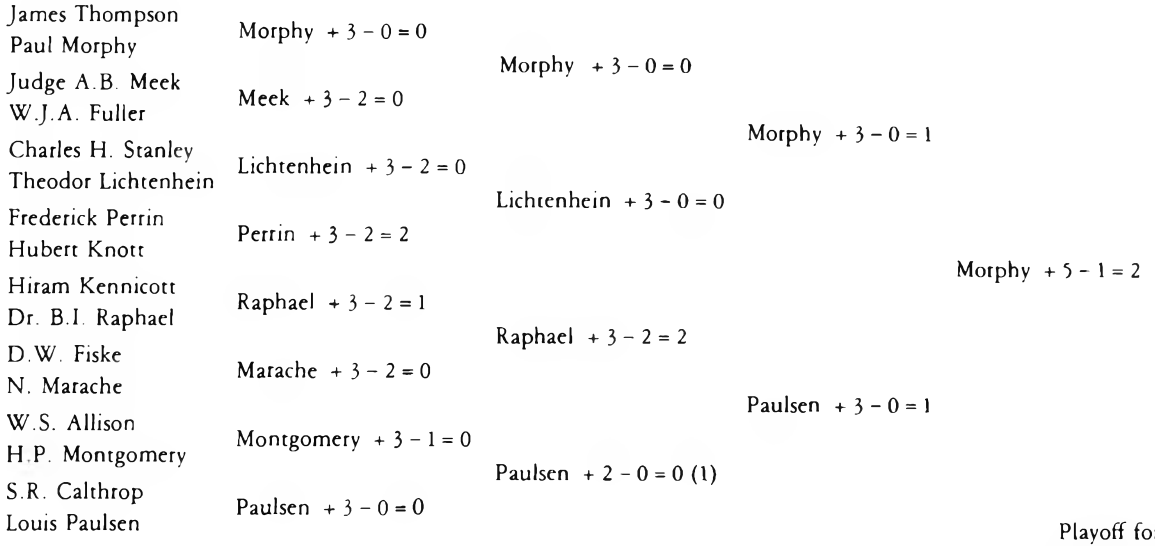
After 17 Q-R6

Paulsen–Morphy, 1857 (6th)

17 ... Q × B!!

"When he made the move," Fuller recalled, "we all thought he had made a mistake, especially as he had taken so little time (12 minutes) for the move. Paulsen, with his usual caution, deliberated long—over an hour—before he took the queen."

First American Chess Congress, New York, Oct. 6–Nov. 10, 1857


James Thompson
Paul Morphy
Morphy + 3 – 0 = 0
Judge A.B. Meek
W.J.A. Fuller
Meek + 3 – 2 = 0
Morphy + 3 – 0 = 0
Charles H. Stanley
Theodor Lichtenhein
Lichtenhein + 3 – 2 = 0
Morphy + 3 – 0 = 1
Frederick Perrin
Hubert Knott
Perrin + 3 – 2 = 2
Lichtenhein + 3 – 0 = 0
Morphy + 5 – 1 = 2
Hiram Kennicott
Dr. B.I. Raphael
Raphael + 3 – 2 = 1
Raphael + 3 – 2 = 2
D.W. Fiske
N. Marache
Marache + 3 – 2 = 0
Paulsen + 3 – 0 = 1
W.S. Allison
H.P. Montgomery
Montgomery + 3 – 1 = 0
Paulsen + 2 – 0 = 0 (1)
S.R. Calthrop
Louis Paulsen
Paulsen + 3 – 0 = 0

(1) Montgomery withdrew before completion of match.

Playoff for 3rd
Lichtenhein over
Raphael + 3 – 0 = 0

Analyzing on a board elsewhere in the hall the spectators could not see what the point of the Louisianan's play was.

18 P × Q R-N3*ch*, 19 K-R1 B-R6

Black's rooks are so powerful he finds himself with several ways to win. For example, 20 R-N1 could be met by 20 ... B-N7*ch*, 21 R × B R-K8*ch* or by 20 ... R × R*ch*, 21 K × R R-K8*ch*. He also has alternative refutations of the move Paulsen played. The question is what happens after White plays queen to Q3 and threatens to capture on N6 as soon as a discovered check is given by the rook. The answer is 20 Q-Q3 P-KB4!

20 R-Q1 B-N7*ch*, 21 K-N1 QB × P*ch*, 22 K-B1 B-N7*ch*

Here he could have won more quickly with 22 ... R-N7!! as Steinitz, and also Johannes Zukertort, discovered (23 Q × B R × P! or 23 Q-Q3 R × P*ch*, 24 K-N1 R-N7*ch*, 25 K-moves R-N8 *mate*).

23 K-N1 B-R6*ch*

And again there was a faster win with 23 ... B-K5*ch*!, 24 K-B1 B-KB4, 25 Q-K2 B-R6*ch* and ... R-N8 mating. But one can appreciate Morphy's sensible caution. He prefers the forcing sequence that is easier to calculate and which guarantees that he will regain the queen.

24 K-R1 B × P

This takes away KN1 from White's king and he has only one way out of the mate threatened on KN2.

25 Q-B1 B × Q, 26 R × B R-K7, 27 R-R1 R-R3

Morphy still plays for mate. Paulsen's next is 16 moves too late.

28 P-Q4 B-K6!

Some sources say White resigned here, ending a relatively short game of four hours. Other sources give 28 ... B-K6 "and wins." And still others give 29 B × B R(3) × P*ch*, 30 K-N1 R(K)-N7 *mate* as the true finish to the game. It was a great example of Morphy's ingenuity—and the decisive point in the match. Paulsen was so upset he lost a second game that day in 26 moves and was unrecognizable for the final game.

Because of its brevity, it is easy to sum up Morphy's chess career: he never lost a tournament or match and in his entire record of serious play he lost just eight games. Unfortunately for Morphy, his success story begins and ends with chess and the rest of his life was a case study in failure, frustration and rejection.

Things had come too easily and too early for the sensitive Louisianan. As a youngster he enjoyed all the benefits that his wealthy Southern heritage permitted. His prodigious memory enabled him to graduate from law school at 18—memorizing the entire Civil Code of his state. During the three years he would have to wait until he was old enough to practice law, Morphy had turned to chess, his adolescent passion and it proceeded to consume him.

After his impressive victory in the First American Congress, Morphy, without much difficulty, was persuaded to travel to Europe to challenge the acknowledged world-class players. He could not coax the prickly, pompous Howard Staunton out of retirement but he met and defeated just about everyone else of note, including match victories over Adolf Anderssen (seven wins, two losses, two draws), Johann Lowenthal (9–3–2) and Daniel Harrwitz (5–2–1).

Returning home in 1859, he was an instant American folk hero. Products were named after him (the "Morphy Hat," the "Morphy Cigar") and in Brooklyn a baseball team, "The Morphy Baseball Club," was inaugurated in his honor. He was paid a then-astronomical fee of $3000 to write a chess column for the *New York Ledger*, and otherwise engaged in occasional lectures and exhibitions, always conceding odds.

But Morphy could never adjust after his 1858–59 European tour to "real life." He found himself at odds with the Southern position in the Civil War and avoided the accusation of being a traitor by returning to Europe for much of the rest of the fighting. He played no serious chess during this period, supposedly because of a promise to his mother to begin a more respectable career. Morphy's competitive chess had actually ended in 1859 and he played infrequently after 1864.

There followed a series of personal disappointments: Morphy's law practice in New Orleans failed; he met resentment for his absence during the War Between the States; he engaged in a series of apparently unhappy love affairs, never marrying. He began to withdraw within his family and a very small circle of friends. One of the few outsiders to see him in his last year was Wilhelm Steinitz, who described him as a "thorough gentleman"—but adamantly separated from chess.

When he died—of "congestion of the brain," on July 10, 1884—he was only 47. Paul Morphy's serious chess career in the United States began and ended with one tournament, 18 games.

Chapter Three

1871–1889: The King Is a Captain

No one challenged Morphy in his lifetime and it can be argued that he was the United States champion until his death in 1884. But there were several others who can be said to have held the title in the 37 years after New York 1857, masters who assumed a central role after Morphy withdrew to New Orleans. The first and finest of these successors was Scottish-born George Henry Mackenzie.

Mackenzie (1837–1891) was the antithesis of the overly sensitive Morphy. While Morphy considered chess an intellectual exercise between gentleman who wouldn't think of playing only for financial reward, Mackenzie was the early image of a rough-and-tumble chess professional—making a living from the game for his last 30 years. While Morphy exiled himself in Europe during the Civil War, Mackenzie thrived on combat and had come to America to serve in the Federal Army as a private. Physically, the differences continue: Morphy was small, five foot three, with delicate, cleanshaven features and affected mannerisms. Mackenzie was quite tall, ruggedly handsome and sported a van Dyke beard. It appears that bachelorhood and chess ability were the only things that these two great champions had in common.

Mackenzie, like Morphy, was one of the most popular players of his day. He was born near Aberdeen in 1837, the same year as Morphy, into what was described as a "high class" family. When he turned 19 he joined the Queens Army, 60th Rifles, and began a life-long fascination with combat. After five years, much of it in India, Mackenzie resigned his commission as lieutenant and turned to chess in London. But his zest for real conflict was not quite satisfied and in 1863, at age 26, he came to America to fight on the Union side. At the end of the war, a captain in charge of a unit of Northern blacks, he retired with numerous war wounds and a heart condition. He then embarked on a chess career rarely matched in his century and grossly underrated even now.

In Britain Mackenzie had been considered one of the most talented young players, first earning a reputation in Irish clubs and later in London where he won the first tournament he entered. This was a handicap event in 1862 in which he defeated the once and future world champion, Adolf Anderssen, in the final round, receiving odds of pawn and move because of his opponent's reputation. And shortly before leaving Europe Mackenzie defeated one of the strongest amateurs around, the Reverend G.A. MacDonnell, in a match (six wins, three losses, two draws).

But in America he found he was recognized—like the Soviet émigrés of the 1970s—as not only a talented competitor, but as just about the best player available. He defeated, according to contemporary accounts, "literally every player in America" in match play, and won, with only minor difficulty, the Second, Third and Fifth American Chess Congresses during the 1870s to 1880. (Mackenzie did not play in the Fourth Congress, which was won by James Mason, an Irishman who professed no interest in becoming a U.S. citizen. In the logic of the times Mason was never considered an American "champion," as we shall see.)

During this era there was little question of Mackenzie's primacy. Steinitz's *International Chess Magazine* stated simply (March 1891) that Mackenzie "won the chief prize in every tournament he entered in America" and went on to list eight New York events won by him in addition to the three national congresses. The magazine also cites four matches, all won by Mackenzie: He defeated Gustavus Reichhelm of Philadelphia in 1866—a match later reported in *The British Chess Magazine* as being for the U.S. title—by a score of five wins and one draw; he knocked off Reichhelm again a year later by seven wins and two draws; he beat off a tough challenge by Max Judd of St. Louis (seven wins, five losses, three draws) in 1880 and, in his last major American event, he defeated Solomon Lipschutz, one of the many championship claimants that followed Mackenzie, 5–3 with five draws in 1886. Mackenzie's only failures in America were match defeats—perhaps at odds—to Reichhelm and D.M. Martinez of Philadelphia.

Mackenzie's streak of domestic successes began in Cleveland in December 1871 when a double-round-robin event, the Second American Congress, was held. Only nine men sought to succeed the then-retired Morphy and this was probably due to the after-effects of the Civil War and the paltry $100 first prize being offered in that period of postwar inflation. Also, it gets cold in Cleveland in December.

Mackenzie's superiority was obvious in this unbalanced field. The Captain, then living in New York, finished a full two points ahead of the obscure H. Hosmer, and four points ahead of Max Judd, who eventually parlayed a brilliant legal career into the U.S. consul generalship

in Vienna. Preston Ware, Jr., of Boston finished fifth, earned $30 for his trouble, and was named president of the American Chess Association. The total prize money for the championship, incidentally, was $290.

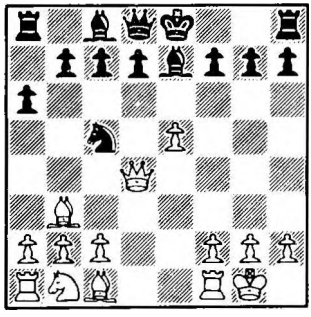
Here is an indication of how clearly Mackenzie outclassed most of his rivals, including the second- and third-place finishers:

Ruy Lopez
Second American Congress, Cleveland, December 1871;
***white* Mackenzie, *black* Elder**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 B-N5 P-QR3, 4 B-R4 N-B3, 5 P-Q4

This, and the Evans Gambit, were Mackenzie specialties. In this early day of theory for the Ruy Lopez it is not surprising that Black is lost by move 12.

5 ... P × P, 6 0-0 B-K2, 7 P-K5 N-K5, 8 N × P N × N, 9 Q × N N-B4, 10 B-N3



After 10 B-N3

Mackenzie–Elder, 1871

Black should simply castle and then play 11 ... P-Q3. If White restrains him with 10 ... 0-0, 11 B-KB4 Black eliminates one of the enemy bishops and equalizes with 11 ... N-K3.

10 ... N × B?, 11 RP × N 0-0?!

Poor planning – but much better than 11 ... P-Q3? which Hosmer had played in his first meeting with Mackenzie. After 12 P × P Q × P, 13 Q × P Black had a very bad game and after 13 ... B-B3?, 14 R-K1*ch* K-Q1, 15 B-N5! he was lost. Elder's choice also leads to disaster because of his next move.

Second American Congress, Cleveland, Dec. 4–15, 1871

	M	H	E	J	W	S	H	J	H	W	Totals D	L
1. Mackenzie	X	1½0	½10	1 1	1 1	1 1	1½1	1 1	1 1	14	3	2
2. Hosmer, H.	0½1	X	1 1	1½1	0 0	0 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	12	2	4
3. Elder	½01	0 0	X	0 1	½½01	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	11	3	5
4. Judd	0 0	0½0	1 0	X	1 1	1 0	½11	½11	1 1	10	3	6
5. Ware	0 0	1 1	½½10	0 0	X	0 1	1 0	1 1	1 1	9	2	7
6. Smith, H.D.	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 1	1 0	X	1 1	1 1	1 1	9	0	7
7. Harding	0½0	0 0	0 0	½00	0 1	0 0	X	0 1	1 1	4	2	12
8. Johnston	0 0	0 0	0 0	½00	0 0	0 0	1 0	X	1 1	3	1	13
9. Houghton	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	X	0	0	16

(Draws did not count and were replayed)

12 B-B4! P-KB3?, 13 Q-B4*ch*! K-R1, 14 P × P B × P, 15 B × P Q-K1, 16 B-Q6 R-B2, 17 N-B3 P-QN3, 18 QR-K1 Q-N1, 19 Q-K4! Resigns

This was the tournament that can be said to have begun Mackenzie's reign. His superiority was confirmed three years later in Chicago at the Third American Congress. It was played at a then-vigorous time schedule of 15 moves per hour and at least one game a day. Again there was little financial incentive and only eight players showed up at the tournament site, the Chicago Chess Club, 114 East Madison Street, that July to compete for what turned out to be $450 in prizes. The players even had to pay a $20 entry fee.

These national congresses were regularly held in order to form new organizations for players and promoters, and in 1874 the American Chess Association was transformed into the National Chess Association. A Pennsylvania businessman named J.A. Congdon was elected president of the new body and showed his ability by defeating Frederick Perrin, a veteran of the Morphy days, in the tournament. (Unfortunately it was the only game Congdon won.)

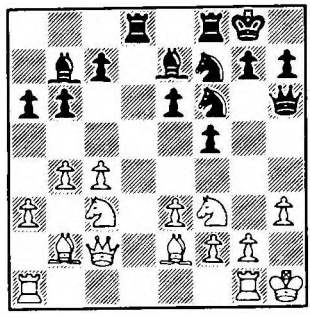
Mackenzie finished with the impressive score of 10 wins, one loss and one draw but this was just a half-point more than Hosmer, whose hopes of a national title were drowned in a late-round loss to Judd. The tournament was a noticeable degree stronger than the Second Congress, as indicated by the poor showing by Perrin and his fellow survivor of the First American Congress, Hiram Kennicott, who withdrew after losing four games badly.

Dutch Defense
Third American Congress, Chicago, July 1874;
***white* Perrin, *black* Mackenzie**

1 P-Q4 P-KB4, 2 P-K3 N-KB3, 3 P-QB4 P-K3, 4 N-QB3 P-QN3, 5 N-B3 B-N2, 6 P-QR3 B-K2, 7 B-K2 0-0, 8 0-0 Q-K1, 9 P-R3? N-B3, 10 P-QN4 P-QR3, 11 P-Q5! N-Q1, 12 P × P?

Johannes Zukertort, a world championship contender during this era, blamed Perrin's loss on being "frightened at the reputation of his adversary." White should maintain his strong point at Q5 which blocks two lines that now fall to Black's control, the Q file and the long, light-square diagonal.

12 ... P × P, 13 B-N2 Q-N3, 14 K-R1 N-B2, 15 R-KN1 QR-Q1, 16 Q-B2 Q-R3!



After 16 ... Q-R3

Perrin–Mackenzie, 1874

Perrin had tried to neutralize the attack on his KN2 with a rook but now sees ... P-KN4-5 as well as 17 ... N-K4, 18 N × N?? Q × P *mate* coming up. Mackenzie handles the concluding phase with dispatch.

17 KR-KB1 N-K4!, 18 N-KN1 Q-N3, 19 P-B3 N-R4! 20 KR-Q1 N-N6*ch*, 21 K-R2 B-Q3, 22 P-B4 N-K5!

Here 23 P × N will be met by 23 ... B × P*ch*, 24 K-R1 N-B7 *mate*.

23 N × N B × N, 24 B-Q3 N × B, 25 R × N B × R "and Black won."

But as soon as he had clearly established himself as the number one player in the country, Mackenzie confused the issue a bit by passing up the Fourth American Congress—or, as it was alternately known, the "Grand International Centennial Chess Congress"—in Philadelphia, August 17–31, 1876. It would have been a good test for him since the tournament was the strongest held in America up to that time and paired the country's talented amateurs with several visiting Europeans. The visitors included the eccentric English master Henry Bird, described in the tournament book as the "knight-errant of chess," and James Mason, a native Irishman who had spent most of this later life in England and was known for a style of "soundness and brilliancy, qualities rarely united." The champion of Cuba, D.M. Martínez, also was scheduled to compete but had to withdraw after four games because of an illness in his family.

One of the tournament rules stated that the games "shall be the exclusive property of the Association for publication in book form"—one of the first attempts to copyright a game. Only one of the Philadelphia games was worth the effort:

French Defense
Fourth American Congress, Philadelphia, August 1876;
***white* Mason, *black* Martínez**

1 P-K4 P-K3, 2 P-Q4 P-Q4, 3 N-QB3 B-N5, 4 P × P P × P

Black's Winawer Variation was still very young—Simon Winawer of Poland was just starting his chess career at the time—and not much respected. The 1876 tournament book says 3 ... N-KB3 "is now considered the better move" and later blames Black's downfall on the misplacement of his KB in what is essentially a symmetrical position.

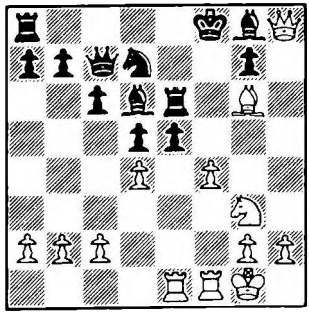
5 N-B3 N-KB3, 6 B-Q3 0-0, 7 0-0 B-Q3, 8 B-KN5 P-B3, 9 Q-Q2 B-K3?

The bishop is misplaced here and encourages P-KB4-5. Better was 10 ... R-K1 or 10 ... B-N5, 11 N-K5 B-R4 and 12 ... B-N3.

10 QR-K1 QN-Q2, 11 N-K2! Q-B2, 12 N-N3 KR-K1, 13 B × N!? N × B, 14 N-K5 N-Q2, 15 Q-N5! P-B3, 16 Q-R5 P × N?

White's attack is imaginative but there would have been little to assault after 16 ... N-B1! Black overlooks an exceptionally deep 20th move.

17 Q × P*ch* K-B1, 18 B-N6 B-N1, 19 Q-R8 R-K3, 20 P-KB4!!



After 20 P-KB4

Mason-Martínez, 1876

This reopens the kingside for White's rooks, e.g. 20 ... P-K5, 21 P-B5 R-B3, 22 N-R5! and wins, or 21 ... R-K2, 22 B-R7 N-B3, 23 B × B N × B, 24 P-B6!

Third American Congress, Chicago, July 7–16, 1874

	M	H	J	B	E	P	C	K	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Mackenzie	X	1 0	1 ½	1 1	--	1 1	1 1	1 1	10	1	1	10½–1½
2. Hosmer	0 1	X	1 0	1 1	--	1 1	1 1	1 1	10	0	2	10–2
3. Judd	0 ½	0 1	X	1 ½	--	1 1	1 1	--	6	2	2	7–3
4. Bock	0 0	0 0	0 ½	X	1 ½	1 1	1 ½	--	4	3	5	5½–6½
5. Elder	--	--	--	0 ½	X	0 1	1 1	--	3	1	2	3½–2½
6. Perrin	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	X	1 0	--	2	0	10	2–10
7. Congdon	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 ½	0 0	0 1	X	--	1	1	10	1½–10½
8. Kennicott	0 0	0 0	--	--	--	--	--	X	0	0	4	0–4

(For the first time, draws counted. The forefeitures of Elder and Kennicott were not counted, however.)

20 ... R × B, 21 P × P*ch* N–B3, 22 P × N P × P, 23 R × P*ch* R × R, 24 Q × R*ch* B–B2, 25 N–B5! B × P*ch*, 26 K–R1 B–K4, 27 R × B Black resigns

As mentioned earlier, Mason's citizenship denied him a claim on the national title. The tournament, designed to attract foreign masters to America for the first time, was never intended to be for the recognition as best player in America. It was to be for $300 first prize and the "Governor Garland Silver Cup." Mason took the money, the cup and a few years later, went home to London.

1880: The Great Scandal

The Fourth American Congress did not have Mackenzie. The Fifth did, as well as a dramatic race for first prize, the first-ever tie and playoff for an American title – plus evidence of subterfuge and quite a juicy little scandal. Did James Grundy really doublecross an opponent in order to make himself U.S. champion? We may never know the full story but this is what we do know:

The Fifth American Congress returned the event to New York City where on January 6, 1880, a field of 10 assembled at the Congress Hall, 60 East 14th Street. There were a number of strong, local amateurs including businessmen such as Albert Cohnfeld, Charles Mohle, Eugene Delmar and Grundy. But there were also some regional representatives of quality – Judd of St. Louis, back for his fourth congress; Congdon of Washington, D.C.; Preston Ware, the enterprising Boston master, and Alexander Sellman, the 24-year-old star of Baltimore.

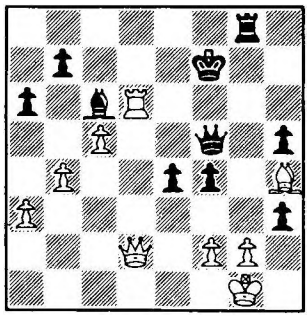
Yet there was no doubt as to the pretournament favorite. "It had been generally conceded, both by the contestants and the chess laity of the land," said the tournament book, "that Captain Mackenzie would march triumphantly and irresistibly to the goal of first prize." But it wasn't that easy.

In the first game of the second round he was completely outplayed by Grundy, a reasonably strong player but one never before considered a threat to the Captain. Several weeks earlier, in fact, Mackenzie had been able to spot him "pawn and move" odds at the Manhattan Chess Club and win two straight games in a handicap tournament.

The second Grundy–Mackenzie game of the congress was drawn and that proved significant because most of the other players in the tournament were far below their strength. Grundy and the Captain then ran off a string of victories and Grundy held his one-point lead with two

rounds to go. But in the semifinal round Mackenzie pulled even by crushing Delmar while Ware defeated Grundy with the Black pieces (even though the Bostonian used one of his patented eccentricities to open: 1 P–K4 P–QR4?!).

Now, with one round to go Mackenzie and Grundy were tied at 12½–4½, with Mohle close behind. Being a double-round event, the tournament schedule called for Mackenzie to again play Delmar, this time with Black, while Grundy would have Black against Ware. Mackenzie ground down his opponent with what would later be called Nimzovichian positional strategy. But Ware-vs.-Grundy lasted "far into the evening," requiring a dinner break. At adjournment Ware was much better and had what appeared to be a winning position. But then, the tournament book says: "Upon resuming the game in the evening, by some apparently purposeless moves—which may be inferred ... to have been a deep and disgraceful design—Mr. Grundy was permitted to retrieve his position from the threatened danger and eventually—though not precisely a part of that design—to win the game, and secure a tie with Captain Mackenzie for the first prize." What happened was this:



Ware–Grundy, 1880
After 41 ... P × P

After interminable maneuvering, White could clinch the point with 42 Q–R2*ch* K–N2, 43 B–B6*ch*!, e.g. 43 ... Q × B, 44 R × Q or 43 ... K–B1, 44 R–Q8*ch* B–K1, 45 R × B*ch*! But inexplicably he played **42 P–N3?? P–K6, 43 Q–R2*ch* K–N2, 44 P × KP?** and Black was soon on top with **44 ... P × NP, 45 B × P K–R2, 46 R–R6*ch* K–N2, 47 Q–K6 Q × Q, 48 R × Q K–B2!** Grundy won on the 64th move.

Incensed by the turn of events, Ware cried foul to the tournament committee. In a special hearing he told the committee that earlier that Sunday he had been walking "down the Bowery" with Grundy and talking about their previous game:

"He remarked to me that he was poor, and really needed the second

prize [$300]; I had, in beating him, knocked him out of the first prize [$500] ... and it would not make any difference to me if I played easily in our next game, so as to give him the second prize; ... he would be willing to give a consideration for it. I said: 'I suppose you mean for us to play for a draw.' He said: 'Yes' and I agreed to do it, and $20 was agreed upon as the consideration.

"We agreed to play on very slowly until the other games were terminated, and to move back and forth ... and after I had done so, perhaps three or four times, I observed he was making desperate efforts to win, and finally did so, perpetrating an infamous fraud upon me."

Not to mention upon Mackenzie and the rest of American players. When questioned about this, Grundy, of course, denied all. The tournament committee had nothing but one man's word—and some unusual moves—against another's and they were forced to render a verdict of "not proven" on Ware's charges. This meant there had to be a two-game Grundy-vs.-Mackenzie playoff and on the following day the Captain easily confirmed his title, getting, as the tournament book recalls, "slight resistance from his opponent in the two hasty and unentertaining games that brought the Grand Tournament to a close."

Grundy got his second place money and took off for England, where he next shows up in 1910, playing lowly sixth board for Manchester in a match with City of London. He lost.

Throughout his championship years Mackenzie had shuttled across the Atlantic and earned a considerable reputation there. During this period he took a number of top prizes (such as for his ties for fourth place at Paris 1878 and Vienna 1882) and achieved many plus scores against top players (such as Henry Bird, Louis Paulsen, Siegbert Tarrasch, Max Weiss, Simon Winawer, Joseph Henry Blackburne and Johannes Zukertort). His greatest achievement was winning the Frankfurt tournament of 1887 ahead of 20 masters with a score of 15-5 that placed him 1½ points ahead of his closest competitor. Yes, Mackenzie was a remarkable player.

But his health became increasingly fragile and the Fifth American Congress was his swan song in American chess. He died in his New York hotel room on April 14, 1891. Contemporary accounts blamed tuberculosis but Steinitz claimed Mackenzie killed himself with an overdose of morphine. His death came at a time when many chess enthusiasts believed his successes had made him the unofficial *world* champion. Mackenzie made no such claim himself and his own modest estimation of his place in chess history might have come when asked to describe his playing style. "If I were to describe myself at all," he replied, "I should call myself a small Morphy."

Fifth American Congress, New York, Jan. 6–26, 1880

	G	M	M	S	J	D	R	W	C	C	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–2. Grundy	X	1 ½	½ ½	1 0	1 ½	1 1	1 ½	0 1	1 1	1 1	11	5	2	13½–4½
1–2. Mackenzie	0 ½	X	1 0	½ ½	½ 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 ½	1 1	11	5	2	13½–4½
3. Mohle	½ ½	0 1	X	0 ½	1 ½	1 0	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	11	4	3	13–5
4. Sellman, A.	0 1	½ ½	1 ½	X	1 0	1 ½	1 1	0 ½	1 1	1 1	10	5	3	12½–5½
5. Judd	0 ½	½ 0	0 ½	0 1	X	½ 1	1 1	1 1	0 1	1 1	9	4	5	11–7
6. Delmar, E.	0 0	0 0	0 1	0 ½	½ 0	X	1 1	1 1	½ 1	1 1	8	3	7	9½–8½
7–8. Ryan	0 ½	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	X	1 1	0 1	1 1	5	1	12	5½–12½
7–8. Ware	1 0	0 0	0 0	1 ½	0 0	0 0	0 0	X	½ 1	1 ½	4	3	11	5½–12½
9. Congdon	0 0	½ 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	½ 0	0 1	0 ½	X	0 0	2	3	13	3½–14½
10. Cohnfeld	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 ½	1 1	X	2	1	15	2½–15½

Chapter Four

1891–1906: The Years of Confusion

Over the years the United States championship has been determined in three ways: by popular acclaim, by match play and by designated tournaments. The first three titleholders (Stanley, Morphy and Mackenzie) won matches and tournaments but are considered champions by acclaim. The chess public and press clearly recognized their superiority and that made them champions.

But after Mackenzie's death there was no clear number one. The quality of play in America had improved mightily during the 1880s and this encouraged several equally talented men to make claims on the title. At least four masters can be said to have actually held the title during this next period and several others claimed it. Moreover, there were at least nine and arguably as many as 13 events at which the title can be said to have been at stake.

At any given moment during this era there was likely to be two different "champions," each with supporters and detractors. Matches were followed by rematches and sudden retirements. The muddiness of this time is illustrated by the case of one legitimate champion for whom we have two spellings of his surname—and three different given names. In fact, only one good thing can be said about the period: It was during these years that latter-day historians were able to pinpoint a specific U.S. championship title and identify a method for selecting the titleholder. After 1909 there would never again be a champion by acclaim.

The confusion began in 1887 when Max Judd, then a wealthy St. Louis judge, defeated Albert Hodges, a New York master, in a match by 5–2. Judd promptly claimed the title of national champion. Clearly this was without basis since Mackenzie was very much alive and, in the absence of another national congress, still considered the champ. A year later, a major tournament was held in Cincinnati and because of forfeitures and bad play Judd finished sixth—dead last.

The 1888 tournament added fuel to future controversy because it was the first success of Jackson Whipps Showalter, "The Kentucky Lion." The main purpose of the tournament was another attempt at reorganization of American chess, this time with the formation of the "United States Chess Association." But by finishing ahead of Judd and four other state champions (Major James M. Hanham of New York, Charles Mohle of Minnesota, J.M. Tomlinson of Indiana and James F. Burns of Ohio) Showalter used the event to establish a reputation as an up-and-coming talent. A contemporary report said he had "proved his ability to play on even terms with anyone in the U.S., except, probably, Steinitz and Mackenzie. He is a rapid, cool, pleasant player, fond of an open game, and his sacrifice of pieces almost invariably proves to be sound."

But Showalter was not the only new face. A year after the 1888 tournament there was a move afoot to bring major international chess to America. With contributions of nearly $5000 being solicited, chess fans in New York had wrung commitments from several European masters to cross the Atlantic for what was unofficially called the "Sixth American Chess Congress," better known as the New York International of 1889. Mackenzie, apparently ailing, was not available and this seems to mark his retirement from chess. Therefore, the American player who placed highest in this mammoth 20-player, double-round-robin event, could claim to be de facto champion.

The surprise top finisher was not Showalter, or Eugene Delmar or James Mason or Major Hanham or anyone mentioned met so far. After two months of play it was clear that a score of 22 wins, seven draws and nine losses gave the obscure Solomon Lipschutz clear possession of sixth place, behind five foreigners. Lipschutz, a Hungarian-born printer, had beaten three of those foreigners (Mikhail Tchigorin, Joseph Henry Blackburne and Isidor Gunsberg) and had played a sure-handed conservative game, exploiting his overambitious rivals:

Vienna Game
New York 1889; *white* Lipschutz, *black* W.H.K.Pollock

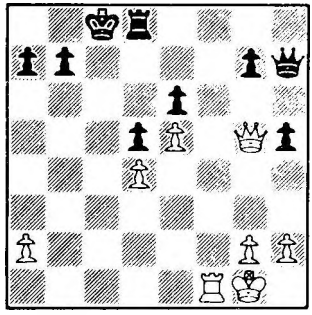
1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-WB3 N-KB3, 3 P-B4 P-Q4, 4 P×KP N×P, 5 Q-B3! N×N, 6 NP×N B-K3, 7 P-Q4 P-QB4, 8 R-N1! Q-B2, 9 B-N5*ch* N-B3, 10 N-K2 0-0-0!?, 11 0-0 B-K2, 12 B-K3 P-KR4?

Black is dreaming of a kingside advance with 13 ... P-KN4, which if played on the 12th move would allow white to paralyze his forces with 13 Q-R5! Lipschutz was an uninspiring player—a short, quiet mustachioed positional master—but he could transform a slight enemy weakness into a concrete advantage in the late middlegame.

13 N-B4! B-N4, 14 N × B B × B*ch*, 15 Q × B P × N, 16 B × N Q × B, 17 R-B7! R-Q2

Here White should trade rooks and begin to work on the weakened kingside pawns. But he overlooks that Black will be able to capture his pawn at QB2 and thereby threaten checks on the first rank.

18 QR-KB1 KR-Q1, 19 Q-N5?! P × P, 20 P × P R × R, 21 R × R Q × P!, 22 R-B1 Q-R2?



After 22 ... Q-R2

Lipschutz-Pollock, 1889

A dreadfully defensive move that leaves White's queen and rook in possession of all the key squares. Lipschutz now sets up a murderous threat of a check on the QB file.

23 Q-K7! Q-R3, 24 P-KR3 P-R5, 25 K-R2!

The plan of 26 R-B3 and 27 R-B3*ch* wins new squares for White's heavy pieces.

25 ... Q-K6, 26 Q × KP*ch* R-Q2, 27 R-B3! Q-K8, 28 Q-B5!

Another fine move. Black's queen cannot move because of 29 R-B3*ch* or 29 P-K6.

28 ... K-B2, 29 Q-B2*ch* K-Q1, 30 Q-QB5! Black resigns

There is no defense to 31 R-B8*ch* and *mates*.

While Lipschutz' Eastern supporters were advancing the idea—highly disputed at the time—that his New York 1889 result conferred champion status on him, Showalter was adding to his laurels in the Midwest. In February 1890 he won the Third Congress of the United

States Chess Association at St. Louis and a strong tournament in Chicago. The gentleman farmer from Minerva, Kentucky, then crowned his success in a short match with Lipschutz and it was on the basis of this that he would later say he was U.S. champion. The match also was interesting because for the first time since Morphy two Americans could produce a game of depth. Here is one (with some annotations of the day in quotations marks):

Vienna Game
Match, Louisville 1890; *white* Lipschutz, *black* Showalter

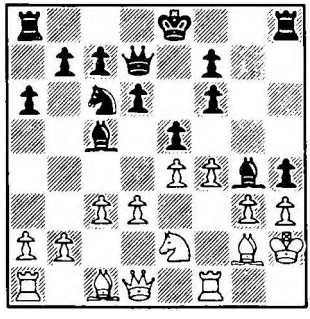
1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-QB3 N-QB3, 3 P-KN3

This was Paulsen's idea, but it was disappearing from master practice about this time, only to be reintroduced by Vasily Smyslov in the 1960s. A contemporary note said Adolf Anderssen "came to the conclusion that the second player could do no better than to imitate White's example and also play 3 ... P-KN3, as the KB will not be well posted at QB4."

3 ... N-B3, 4 B-N2 B-B4, 5 KN-K2 P-Q3, 6 P-Q3 P-QR3!, 7 0-0 B-KN5!?

A deep idea: Black means to provoke P-KR3, force White into K-R2 and then play ... P-KR4-5. Lipschutz responds well.

8 P-KR3 B-K3, 9 K-R2 P-KR4, 10 N-Q5! Q-Q2, 11 N × N*ch* P × N, 12 P-KB4 B-KN5!, 13 P-B3 P-R5!



After 13 ... P-R5

Lipschutz–Showalter, 1890

On the previous move 13 P × B would have been met by 13 ... P × P*ch*. Now Showalter has a strong attack, something White could have averted with 11 B-N5!

14 P–B5!?

"An ingenious variation pointed out by Mr. Showalter is worthy of notice," wrote a contemporary: 14 P × B Q × P, 15 P–Q4 P × QP and now 16 BP × P allows the brilliant 16 ... P × P*ch*, 17 K–N1 Q × N!! If White then plays 18 Q × Q Black wins with 18 ... N × P and a discovered check. And if White plays 18 P × B Black continues 18 ... N–Q5!! threatening 19 ... R–R7 or 19 ... N–B6*ch*! (e.g., 19 Q × N R–R8*ch*!!, 20 B × R Q–R7 *mate* or 20 K × R Q–R4*ch*).

14 ... P × P*ch*, 15 K × P B–R4, 16 Q–K1 0–0–0, 17 K–R2

"Useless precaution. 17 N–N1 at once gained important time." Lipschutz apparently wanted to play 18 N–N3 and then changed his mind.

17 ... R–R2, 18 N–N1 P–Q4!?, 19 P × P N–K2, 20 Q–K4! Q × QP, 21 P–N4?

A typical judgment of the day: "In spite of Black's ingenious conduct of the attack, White still has a little the better game on account of his passed KRP and owing to his opponent's doubled pawns. 21 B–Q2 was the right move." Now Showalter gets his chance.

21 ... B–QN3, 22 P–QR4 Q × Q, 23 B × Q B–N5!, 24 K–N3 B × BP!

"Very fine play, but all this could not have happened if White's QB had been developed as suggested in above note." Meaning that White's knight would have been protected after 25 B × B*ch* N × B, 26 R × N R–N1*ch*, 27 K–R2!

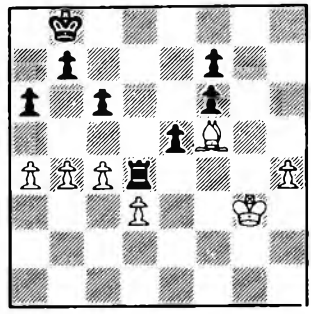
25 R × B! R–N2*ch*, 26 K–B3 R × N, 27 B–N2!

"The sacrifice of the exchange was his only resource in order to make a long fight of it. If 27 R–R5 the reply 27 ... R–B8*ch* followed by ... R–B7 or ... P–KB4 would soon win with ease."

27 ... R × R, 28 B × R N × R, 29 B × N*ch* K–N1, 30 P–B4 B–Q5!, 31 B × B R × B, 32 K–N3 P–B3!, 33 P–KR4?

"Too impetuous. 33 P–R5 would have still made the issue very doubtful." For example, 33 ... R–B5, 34 B–N4 R–B8, 35 K–N2 and the

pawn races on. Or 33 ... K–B2, 34 P–R4 K–Q1, 35 P–R5 K–K2, 36 P–R6 K–B1, 37 B–K4 threatening K–N4–B5.



After 33 P–KR4

Lipschutz–Showalter, 1890

33 ... P–N4!!

"This fine rejoinder gives him a passed pawn that ultimately wins." The rook can be sacrificed for White's passed pawn just in time:

34 RP × P RP × P, 35 P × P P × P, 36 P–R5 R × NP, 37 P–R6 R–Q5, 38 P–R7 R–Q1, 39 K–R4 K–B2

"Black has made his calculations with deep accuracy and plays the ending according."

40 K–R5 K–Q3, 41 K–R6 K–Q4, 42 K–N7 K–Q5, 43 K × P(7) P–N5, 44 K × P R–KR1!, 45 K–N7 R × P*ch*, 46 B × R P–N6, 47 B–N8 P–N7, 48 B–R2 K × P, 49 K–B6 P–K5, 50 B–N1*ch* K–Q5, 51 K–B5 P–K6 and White resigns.

The inactivity of Mackenzie, coupled with Showalter's successes, established the tall, amiable Kentuckian as champion and "The Kentucky Lion"—a nickname reflecting both his aggressive style of play and hair style—was to figure in championship play for the next eighteen years. As a wealthy farmer, Showalter was able to devote considerable time to chess, a game he became serious about in his mid-twenties after his college education had been interrupted by a brief fling at running the family cattle ranch on a Texas border town. Showalter had given up ranching for farming and returned to Lexington, Kentucky, where he was later given credit for having developed baseball's "curve ball."

While Showalter was considered a leading player in his era ("Exceedingly strong," according to historian Hermann Helms) with a

modern-day equivalent of a 2470 rating, it is a fact that Showalter *lost* more matches for the championship than any other player: to Harry Nelson Pillsbury (twice), to Frank Marshall, to Hodges and to Lipschutz. But you have to be good to begin with to be in a position to even compete in such upper strata, and Showalter easily balanced the debit side of his career with U.S. title victories and strong showings abroad. Among the international set his victims included Wilhelm Steinitz (twice), Joseph Blackburne, Géza Maróczy, Mikhail Tchigorin (three times) and world-champion-to-be Emanuel Lasker. Showalter lived a long life (1860–1935) but retired from competitive chess rather early—being remembered for his friendliness and good humor. The normally acidic Steinitz left probably the best eulogy of Showalter: "Showalter is one of the six people in the world from whom I would accept a cigar."

In late 1890 Showalter's string of successes was spoiled by the loss of a match to Judd, 7–3, but for once the Missouri master made no claim on the national title. Showalter returned to Lexington in 1891 to win the Fourth Congress of the United States Chess Association, beating a British visitor, W.H.K. Pollock, in a playoff. But a year later Lipschutz got his revenge.

The Hungarian-born master of technique had garnered enough financial support to sponsor a rematch with Showalter and this time it was a one-sided rout. Lipschutz scored seven wins to Showalter's one, the other seven games ending in draws. He then did something quite unexpected: The frail 28-year-old Lipschutz gave up his New York business and his chess career to move west to California where he would be better able to nurture his failing health.

Showalter naturally reclaimed the vacant title and confirmed his position in 1893 by taking third prize in a very strong international tournament in New York behind Emanuel Lasker—then just a year away from the world championship—and Adolf Albin, a Rumanian business speculator then seeking his fortune in America. Later that year Showalter finished third in another strong New York event, but this time it was behind two Americans. One of those was Harry Pillsbury, then 20, who had little interest in challenging Showalter to a match. But the other high-finisher did and this is where Albert Hodges re-enters the story.

Hodges, born July 21, 1861, had come to New York with a good deal of natural talent and quickly landed a job as the human "mechanic" inside a pseudoscientific device called "Ajeeb." This was a chess automaton, that is, a machine that allegedly played masterful chess and checker moves while on display at the Eden Musee in Manhattan. Judd had recommended the job to Hodges when they both lived in St. Louis but he tired of the work after a year or so and disappeared from chess.

Lipschutz rediscovered Hodges just before his departure to California and recruited him for the Manhattan Chess Club where in 1891 he was soon recognized as one of the very best players around, if not the best. Hodges' success in the 1893 New York tournament led him to challenge Showalter early the next year. In a long, gruelling struggle, Showalter edged out an 8–6 victory. But Hodges demanded and got a rematch and later in 1894 he used it to score a 5–3 victory. For the third time in the four years since Mackenzie was recognized as retired, there was a new United States champion.

The progression of Showalter to Lipschutz to Showalter to Hodges became more confused when Hodges announced shortly after winning the championship match that he had fulfilled his ambitions in chess and was now ready to pursue a career in business. (Unlike Morphy, Hodges proved to be both a commercial success and a friend to the game after he withdrew from chess and would be a well-liked visitor to U.S. championship tournaments as late as the 1930s.)

So in late 1894 the championship was vacant once again and Showalter naturally claimed it. He strengthened his position by finishing third in yet another New York international in 1894, behind two foreigners, Steinitz and Albin. Showalter also managed to beat young Pillsbury in this tournament and with his 5th–6th place finish, the Massachusetts master didn't seem to be getting any better. In fact, there didn't seem to be any strong up-and-coming players who would be able to challenge Showalter—when suddenly Lipschutz returned in early 1895, in good health and claiming he had never relinquished his title. It didn't really matter: Showalter promptly beat him 7–4 in what proved to be Lipschutz's last title match. He returned to Berlin and died there in 1905.

Meanwhile, Showalter, determined to give his championship claim more credibility, defeated two of the strongest amateurs of the day, Emil Kemeny of New York and John F. Barry of Boston, in matches that were clearly defined as being for the championship. But impressive as the Kentuckian's performances were in 1895–1896 they were overshadowed by what a quiet New Englander was doing across the Atlantic.

Enter Pillsbury

Harry Nelson Pillsbury was 22 when he became world famous, and lived only 11 more years. Even more remarkable was his rapid rise in 1895, coming as it did only six years after learning how to play the moves. Edward Lasker later compared him with his friend Frank Marshall. Both

were "interesting examples of a strange mental phenomenon. They successfully concentrated all their faculties of chess, to the exclusion of every other intellectural interest. Trying to draw them into a conversation on any subject other than chess was a hopeless task."

Pillsbury's instant celebrity came from winning the Hastings, England, invitational tournament of 1895, arguably the strongest large event of the 19th century. Paired with two world champions and the best players of England, Germany, France, Russia and Austria, Pillsbury duplicated Morphy's European success and won a clear first place. He topped this off with impressive results the next year in St. Petersburg, Nuremburg and Budapest and on his return from Europe his backers at the Brooklyn Chess Club gave him a reception that one viewer said "would have thrilled a war-scarred general on his triumphant return from battle."

By contrast, the lone international appearance by Showalter, the official United States champion, was a rather dismal 5½–10½ at Nuremberg. It is easy to appreciate his interest in atoning for that result and this explains why, in a reversal of roles, champion Showalter challenged his young rival to a match in 1897. Pillsbury, who seemed to be the first man in 25 years who didn't care to be U.S. champion, was coaxed into playing for stakes of $1000. The money would go to the first man to win seven games. If the score were to reach 6–6, the match was to be extended to a required 10 wins. And if the score were to reach 9–9, the match would be declared drawn. (These are strikingly similar to the provisions Bobby Fischer sought and subsequently forfeited his world title over in 1975.)

Pillsbury accepted Showalter's challenge, but added: "I was not seeking the match, and even if I should win, I shall leave Showalter in possession of his championship title. I am not in search of any title but one"—meaning Emanuel Lasker's world title. And when Pillsbury eventually won by a 10–8 score, with three draws, his margin was regarded as unimpressive: "The result was somewhat disappointing for Pillsbury's admirers," wrote *The American Chess Magazine*, "especially for those who want to bring about a match between him and Lasker.... As for Showalter he has proven a better player than he has been given credit for."

Here is a good example of Pillsbury's superiority in planning and execution on a grand scale:

Giuoco Piano
Match, Third Game, New York, February 17, 1897;
***white* Pillsbury, *black* Showalter**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 B-B4 B-B4, 4 N-B3 P-Q3, 5 P-Q3 P-QR3, 6 B-K3 B × B, 7 P × B N-R4, 8 B-N3 N × B, 9 RP × N N-R3, 10 0-0 P-QB3, 11 P-Q4!

Pillsbury contributed a number of ideas to the openings but did not really work at them. He preferred to find a simple system for developing his pieces and start to concentrate after the 12th or 15th move.

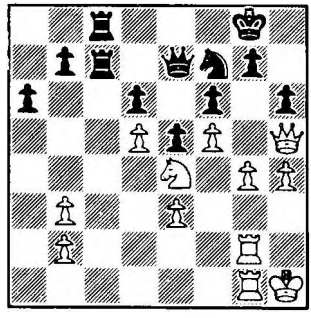
11 ... Q-K2, 12 Q-K1 0-0, 13 Q-N3 P-B3, 14 P-R3 B-K3, 15 R-B2 QR-K1, 16 QR-KB1 B-B1

Now what? After a humdrum opening Pillsbury has a slight initiative but no targets for his rooks and knights. He realizes he needs a change in the pawn structure and, since Black is unwilling to accommodate him with ... KP × QP, he finds a new plan.

17 N-KR4 K-R1, 18 P-Q5! P-QB4?!, 19 N-B5! B × N, 20 P × B

White gets K4 for his knight and finds a simple winning idea: P-KN4-5. Black should try to hold this up with ... N-B2 but he bets on ... P-B5 instead.

20 ... R-B1, 21 Q-R4 Q-KB2?!, 22 P-KN4! Q-K2, 23 N-K4 N-B2, 24 Q-R5 K-N1, 25 P-R4 P-R3, 26 R-N2 R-B2, 27 K-R1 P-B5, 28 QR-KN1 P × P, 29 P × P KR-B1



After 29 ... KR-B1

Pillsbury-Showalter, 1897

Pillsbury's victories often gave the impression of effortlessness, of having selected the correct plan and letting the pieces work for him.

30 P-N5 RP × P, 31 P × P N × P, 32 R × N! P × R, 33 N × NP

The threat is a pair of queen checks on R7 and R8. After 33 ... Q–B3 White wins with 34 Q–R7*ch* and 35 N–K6*ch*.

33 ... P–KN3!, 34 Q × P*ch* Q–N2, 35 Q–K6*ch* K–R1, 36 R–N3!

The threat of ff–R3*ch* is decisive. All Pillsbury needs to clinch the point is a place to shield his king and he has a spot picked out.

36 ... R–B8*ch*, 37 K–N2 R(1)–B7*ch*, 38 K–B3 R–B8*ch*, 39 K–K4! R–KR8, 40 Q–K8*ch* Black resigns

With the beginning of 1898 there came another topsy-turvy situation: the official United States champion (Showalter) was widely recognized as being the second-best American player and eagerly seeking the rematch that Pillsbury had offered. The rematch prize fund and rules were the same as the first meeting and so was the name of the winner. The only real differences were the margin and the provision that the title of U.S. champion was clearly at stake.

Play began February 25 at the Postal Telegraph Building on Broadway and Murray Street in lower Manhattan. At the relaxed pace that came to about two games a week, Pillsbury clinched victory after 12 games with seven wins, three losses and only two draws. Here is the final game, with quoted notes by Emil Kemeny, one of the strongest Americans of the day.

Ruy Lopez
Match, 12th Game, New York, April 1, 1898:
***white* Showalter, *black* Pillsbury**

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 B–N5 N–B3, 4 P–Q4 P × P, 5 0–0 P–QR3, 6 B–R4 B–K2, 7 R–K1 0–0, 8 P–K5

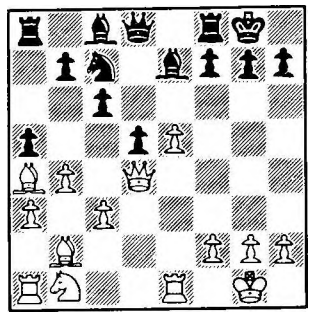
At this time 7 R–K1 was just coming into vogue and replacing 7 P–K5. Showalter has a strange positional plan in mind.

8 ... N–K1, 9 N × P N × N, 10 Q × N P–Q4, 11 P–QN4?!

Modern theory regards 11 P × P *e.p.* B × P as equal. But Showalter wants to monopolize the dark squares and needs to stop ... P–QB4. Kemeny writes: "The play is somewhat novel, but not satisfactory. It weakens the Queen's wing without affording a safe retreat to the KB. Much better was 11 P–QB3, followed eventually by B–B2, B–K3 and N–Q2."

...VILLE, N.Y.

11 ... P-QB3!, 12 B-N2 N-B2, 13 P-QR3 P-QR4!, 14 P-QB3



After 14 P-QB3

Showalter–Pillsbury, 1898

"He could not well play 14 P × P," Kemeny notes, giving 14 ... P-QN4!, 15 P × P *e.p.* N-K3 or 15 B-N3 P-QB4 and ... P-B5 "with a superior if not winning position for Black."

14 ... B-KB4, 15 Q-N6

"Premature play, which compromises the White game. White in all probability attempted to win the QRP which, however, would have proved fatal, since ... N-K3-B4 might have followed." He recommends 15 N-Q2, a move Showalter may have rejected because of 15 ... N-K3, 16 Q-K3 B-N4 and ... N-B5-Q6.

15 ... Q-B1, 16 N-Q2 N-K3, 17 N-B3 N-B5!, 18 B-N3?

Kemeny says only 18 Q-K3 or 18 B-Q1 would have averted immediate disaster. The normally alert Showalter has overlooked 18 ... N × P!, 19 K × N B-R6*ch* and 20 ... Q-N5, which wins.

18 ... N × P!, 19 KR-Q1 B-K5!, 20 N-Q2

Here 20 K × N would have allowed 20 ... Q-N5*ch* followed by 21 ... B × N and *mate* with 22 ... B-N4.

20 ... R-R3!, 21 Q-Q4 N-B5

The rest is a rout as White has no adequate defense to ... N-K7*ch* or ... Q-N5*ch*.

22 Q-K3 Q-N5*ch*, 23 K-B1 B-Q6*ch*, 24 Q × B Q-N7*ch*, 26 K-K1 N × Q*ch* White resigns

How does a 16-year-old beginner develop into a U.S. champion and contender for world championship honors in just six years? Pillsbury's total focus on chess had a lot to do with his rapid development, as did his prodigious memory. His memory feats were legendary at the time, and no wonder. He was able to play up to 22 simultaneous blindfold games while, at the same time, playing whist. *In addition*, at the end of such exhibitions, he could recite with total recall, in correct order, a list of 25 or 30 words given to him beforehand—forwards and backwards—and then recite the moves from all the games. His memory feats graduated from mere parlor tricks to a road show that saw Pillsbury making at least five transcontinental tours giving such exhibitions.

Such a mind would have little trouble retaining the first 16 moves of a Queen's Gambit or Ruy Lopez, and during his formative chess years Pillsbury studied every available chess book and assiduously played over all the games of the leading European players, retaining what he considered important. It's no wonder that he possessed what contemporaries called a "machine-like concentration" at the board, and an "absolute stony calmness in his face" while conducting textbook-type attacks where the position demanded.

It was Pillsbury's tremendous memory feats and blindfold play that many believed caused his mental and emotional problems, which ultimately led to his death in 1906, at the age of 33. To this day, blindfold exhibitions are frowned on in Russia because of the apparent mental strain, which is ironic since another common theory regarding Pillsbury's derangement has him contracting syphillis in Russia during the St. Petersburg tournament in 1895–1896, a disease that at that time was frequently fatal. Yet another theory is offered by Walter Korn in his book *America's Chess Heritage*. Korn documents numerous symptoms that would indicate Pillsbury actually was suffering from an aneurysm, which would have caused his erratic, sometimes suicidal behavior. (From *Lasker's Chess Magazine*, April, 1905: "Mr. Pillsbury was operated on at the Presbyterian Hospital, Philadelphia, on March 27, and a few days later, while in a high fever, he tried to jump from a fourth story window. He was finally controlled and returned to bed. The character of the operation is not mentioned in the accounts of the incident. The patient has recovered from his illness and at this writing is expected to take part in the cable match for the Newnes Trophy, on April 15.")

Pillsbury never actually defended the championship that he won from Showalter. As a matter of fact, he was never officially challenged. There was an apparent gentlemen's agreement among the leading contenders not to take advantage of Pillsbury's mental condition. After all, what could it mean to win the championship under such circumstances?

A near exception to this understanding occurred when Max Judd, the perennial contender, helped organize the Seventh American Chess Congress in St. Louis in 1904. The tournament announcements proclaimed that the winner would be American champion. Pillsbury, who had periods of lucidity, objected. He prevailed on his good friend Walter Penn Shipley, a Philadelphia lawyer and strong chess amateur, to protest.

Judd disputed the Pillsbury/Shipley claim, saying that Pillsbury was basing his title on events that had evolved from Lipschutz's invalid claims in 1889, when Lipschutz assumed the championship through his finish as the highest placed American player in the Sixth American Chess Congress. Judd's point was that Pillsbury could not be the champion since he won the title from Showalter, who won from Lipschutz who was *not* the champion to begin with and therefore could not lose what was not his. It was an argument reminiscent of the dynastic disputes of the Middle Ages. The Seventh American Chess Congress would clear up the matter, Judd argued.

But popular opinion, logic and the authority of the respected Shipley were all against Judd, and the first issue of *Lasker's Chess Magazine* (November 1904) summarized the era. The magazine argued that both tournaments and matches had been used to determine champions in the past "but the accepted theory today is that a match between the aspirants is the better" since "the element of chance" is less than that to be found "in a promiscuous gathering of players."

The magazine went on to trace the title from Morphy's victory over Paulsen in 1857 to Captain Mackenzie's wins in the Congresses of the 1870s and through the various matches, retirements, disretirements and rematches of the Lipschutz-Showalter-Hodges period. The magazine even argued that when Showalter played Emanuel Lasker a short match in 1893 the U.S. title was at stake and that the very-German Lasker had, like Lipschutz before him and Hodges after him, relinquished the title by default (!).

The article concluded that there was a clear line of succession since the second Showalter–Lipschutz match in 1895: "There was no further questioning regarding the right of Showalter to the championship, and his defeat of Kemeny and of Barry in the same year clinched his hold on it. Pillsbury's victories over Showalter in their matches of 1897 and 1898 gave the title of United States Champion to Pillsbury, and as such he stands today."

The management committee of the St. Louis event reluctantly agreed and changed their promotion to say that the Seventh American Congress was for the "American Chess Tourney Championship." The

eventual tournament book declared the winner, Frank Marshall, to be "Champion, Seventh American Chess Congress" adding that his title "has no reference whatever to the United States Championship held by Harry N. Pillsbury, whom Marshall acknowledges as holder thereof."

Any lingering hopes Judd may have had about pressing his claim to be champion by acclamation were dashed in the seventh round of the St. Louis tournament:

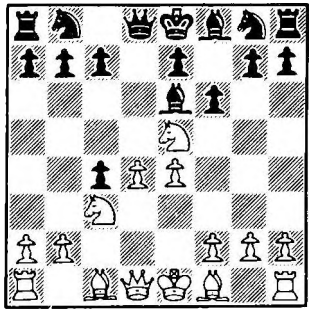
Queen's Gambit Accepted
Seventh American Congress, St. Louis, October 1904;
***white* Marshall, *black* Judd**

1 P-Q4 P-Q4, 2 P-QB4 P × P, 3 N-KB3 B-N5, 4 N-K5 B-B4?

Black's third move had been tried in the past but the idea behind it is to retreat the bishop to KR4, pinning the enemy KP. Judd's next two moves are even worse.

5 N-QB3 P-KB3?, 6 P-K4! B-K3?

With 6 ... P × N, 7 P × B Black would face threats of 8 Q-R5*ch*, 8 P × P and 8 B × P. Judd, perhaps realizing that Marshall was running away with the tournament, tries a little combination here but overlooks Marshall's ninth move. The game, in effect, is over by the 11th move.



After 6 ... B-K3

Marshall-Judd, 1904

7 Q-R5*ch* P-N3, 8 N × NP B-B2, 9 Q-N5*ch*! P-B3, 10 Q × NP P × N, 11 Q × R Q-B2, 12 P-Q5 P × P, 13 N × P Q-K4, 14 B × P P-K3, 15 B-N5*ch* K-Q1, 16 B-KB4! Q × P*ch*, 17 K-B1 Black resigns

There is little Black can do about 18 Q × N*ch*.

Marshall's 8½ – ½ victory ended this confusing era by clarifying how championships were determined. There was one final chapter to be written—a dispute over who was the real United States champion after Pillsbury's death on June 17, 1906.

Chapter Five

1907–1936: The Champion Who Enjoyed It

Frank James Marshall enjoyed being the United States champion. Like Morphy before him and Bobby Fischer after, he was easily recognized as the best American player of his day. But, unlike his two peers, success at the game never seemed to haunt Marshall: to the contrary, he revelled in his title status, wearing it like a badge. Indeed, a Frank Marshall signature was not complete until he added, as a suffix, "United States Chess Champion." Chess was Marshall's life, he admitted, and the U.S. championship was his station in it.

He was born in New York City on August 10, 1877, and lived there for eight years before his family moved to Montreal, where he began his life in chess by watching his father play casual evening games over the dining room table. The future champion did not prove to be a master overnight. Upon learning the moves from his father, it took young Frank at least six months to play as well as he, and "quite a long time" before he won a game. Marshall describes his early chess style: "From the very first, I was an attacking player, forever on the offensive. This often got me into trouble. However, I am glad that my father did not curb this instinct too much.... I have always liked a wide open game and tried to knock out my opponent with a checkmate as quickly as possible. I subscribe to the old belief that offense is the best form of defense."

By the time Marshall had turned 11 he had outgrown his father's abilities and was soon introduced to stiffer competition at Montreal coffeehouses, and eventually joined the Montreal Chess Club which he credits as a major, favorable influence. From then on, Marshall had ample opportunity to develop his style, claiming that from the age of ten until he had long since retired from competitive chess he played at least one game a day—and then took the chess board to bed with him in case

he got any middle-of-the-night inspirations. "Only a pocket set, though," he added.

Marshall's monolithic, yet romantic, devotion to the game paid off when, after establishing himself as a force in international competition and the strongest native-born player then active in America, he travelled to Kentucky in 1909 and defeated the on-again, off-again champion, Jackson Showalter. In retrospect, this act cleared up all confusion about the succession of champions since Mackenzie's day, and also gave Marshall the title left apparently vacant by the death of Pillsbury in 1906. The *American Chess Bulletin* reported at the time a sentiment shared by many U.S. players: "It was indeed a pleasant surprise when word came from Lexington, Ky., the first of November, that play actually had begun in a match between Frank J. Marshall and Jackson W. Showalter for the championship of the United States. The *Bulletin* had complete faith in the assertion that Showalter had not retired.... But it remained for Marshall to track our chess lion to his lair."

One reason it was a pleasant surprise was that the match also put an end to the peculiar dispute that had been raging in American clubs for nearly a year: whether or not the title of U.S. champion had been usurped by the young dynamo José Raoul Capablanca. How could the Havana-born Capa be considered as Pillsbury's successor? That requires a bit of digression:

After Pillsbury's fatal symptoms became apparent, American chess hopes shifted to Marshall, who was only 22 when he garnered an impressive tie for third prize at the Paris international of 1900. That was his debut in grandmaster chess and although he finished behind world champion Emanuel Lasker and Pillsbury, Marshall had the pleasure of beating both of them in the course of event. Four years later, in Pillsbury's last, somewhat pathetic appearance, Marshall scored his greatest success by winning the Cambridge Springs International in western Pennsylvania, ahead of Lasker, Pillsbury and a host of strong European and American masters. At the time there was no doubt that Marshall had replaced the soon mortally ill Bostonian as the best U.S. player of the day.

But by the time of Pillsbury's death this was no longer so clear. José Capablanca had come to New York from his native Cuba to study at Columbia University and he quickly set the local chess scene on fire. Like Marshall, Capa had learned the moves at an early age from his father and was naturally gifted with remarkable tactical intuition. But he also had an exceptionally deep strategic sense and when he met the New York masters who had styled themselves after Pillsbury and Marshall, the Cuban never had any difficulty. His renown at speed chess—then

becoming the new fad at the Manhattan Chess Club—quickly spread beyond New York. Without much coaxing, Capablanca added to his reputation by a series of highly-publicized simultaneous exhibitions tours in which he usually won about 90 percent of his games.

Inevitably, comparisons between Marshall and Capablanca—the two best players in New York and also the two best players in the Western Hemisphere—were made. A match was also inevitable. Capablanca later recalled: "Marshall was disposed to play in this case where he naturally discounted his victory. How far he was wrong, the result proved."

It did indeed, as Capa routed Marshall by winning eight games, losing only one and drawing seven others. The match, held in early 1909, had ostensibly been for a match stakes and also for bragging rights. But the New York State Association had complicated matters by sanctioning the event as being for the U.S. championship title. After all, the state body reasoned, wasn't Marshall the champion?

But after the match Marshall counterattacked. He argued that the Cuban could not hold the U.S. title because he was not a United States citizen (remember the difference between Captain Mackenzie and James Mason?). This argument sounded a bit self-serving, considering that Cuba was then a United States territory and that Capablanca had been living in New York for more than three years and gave every indication of remaining. Moreover, the Cuban said he planned to take out citizenship papers as soon as he came of legal age, which would be in a few months.

Capa told the *American Chess Bulletin*: "I am the undisputed champion of Cuba, and last spring I beat Marshall by the score of 8 to 1. Mr. Marshall has the greatest reputation and the best score in tournaments of any living chess player in the U.S.A., and is therefore considered everywhere as the strongest representative of the United States.... Therefore, I consider myself the 'champion of America,' and stand ready to defend my title within a year against any American of the U.S.A. or anywhere else, for a side bet of at least $1,000, United States currency. Under these circumstances the question whether I am a citizen of the U.S.A. or not has nothing to do with the matter under consideration."

But Capablanca tended to overstate his case—he was never "champion of Cuba," for example. Fans quickly took sides, some for Marshall, some for Capa. Once again the chess community turned to a lawyer to sort out the facts and again their choice was Walter Penn Shipley. His line of reasoning came as a surprise, but his conclusion was even more so. The real U.S. champion, Shipley said, was neither Marshall, nor Capablanca. He wrote: "If there is any chess champion of the United

States, Jackson W. Showalter of Kentucky is the holder of the title. Since he won it he has never declined any challenge and until he does so, neither Marshall, Capablanca nor any other player has a valid claim."

Shipley went on to say that "to be the American champion one must be an American, either native or naturalized." Capa could become a *challenger* for the title if he now becomes a citizen, the lawyer ruled. "And the man he must challenge is Showalter."

With that, the New York Chess Association, which had given its authority to back Capa's claim, withdrew support. Marshall, acting with haste, took the train to Lexington and challenged Showalter. Capablanca, seeing his bid thwarted, decided he didn't want to be an American citizen after all. He consoled himself with a comfortable post in the Cuban diplomatic service and a career as a globe-trotting, chess-playing goodwill ambassador for Havana. Marshall would get Showalter but eventually Capa got Lasker: Twelve years after his legal and match-play struggle with the New Yorker, Capablanca became champion of the world.

Marshall vs. Showalter

The first United States championship event of the 20th century took place in the now-historic Phoenix Hotel in Lexington, during late 1909. Today the hotel is remembered for a different kind of competition: Many a high-stakes horse race was begun in front of the Phoenix in the mid- and late 1800s. The tradition has been carried over today in the form of an annual "Phoenix Stakes" race each spring.

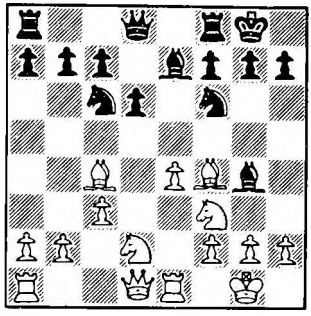
But the stakes for the Showalter-Marshall match were modest —$500 a side—and the only aspect of it that was in keeping with the Phoenix tradition was its speed. The match was to consist of 15 games and was decided after 12—taking just 14 days to play. Marshall won two of the first three games, drew the other and coasted easily to victory with seven wins and three draws. Showalter scored only two wins and he seemed long out of shape.

Danish Gambit
Match, Lexington, Ky., 1909;
***white* Marshall, *black* Showalter**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 P-Q4 P × P, 3 P-QB3!?

Marshall's choice of opening may seem bizarre but this was his style at the time and it didn't matter whether he was playing in a tournament or a match. In other matches with European masters he offered the Muzio Gambit, which sacrifices a whole piece.

3 ... P-Q6, 4 B × P N-QB3, 5 N-B3 P-Q3?!, 6 B-QB4 N-B3, 7 B-B4 B-K2, 8 QN-Q2 0-0, 9 0-0 B-N5, 10 R-K1



After 10 R-K1

Marshall–Showalter, 1909

After declining the gambit, Showalter has developed just as simply as Marshall. But the difference is that his pieces remain constricted and he now seeks a series of exchanges to free his game.

10 ... N-KR4, 11 B-KN3 N × B, 12 RP × N N-K4, 13 B-B1 B-N4, 14 Q-N3 KB × N, 14 N × B B-K3?

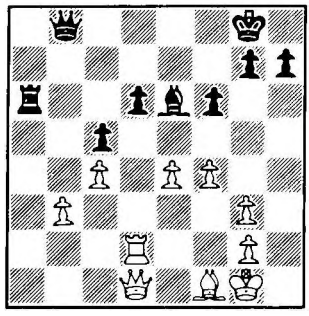
Black is close to equalizing since it is hard for White to benefit from the advantage of the pawn structure without minor pieces. But Showalter has blundered, thinking he can trap the enemy queen after 16 Q × P.

16 Q × P! P-QR3, 17 N-B3 N × N*ch*, 18 P × N Q-Q2, 19 Q-N4 KR-N1, 20 Q-R3 P-QR4

Black does get pressure against White's QNP and his ingenuity over the next several moves deserves a better fate. But Marshall's superiority in this match came from his ability to use tactics to consolidate material and positional advantages. Unlike his flashy sacrificial brilliancies from European tournaments, Marshall wins this game—and the match—by watching and waiting.

21 QR-Q1 Q-B3, 22 R-K3 P-B3, 23 R-Q4! Q-N3, 24 P-N3 P-QB4, 25 R-Q2 P-R5, 26 P-QB4 P × P, 27 Q × NP Q-B2, 28 Q-Q1 R-N3, 29 P-B4 Q-N1, 30 R-N3 R × R, 31 P × R R-R3

Marshall spots the tactical weakness—Black's first rank—and ends the game quickly.



After 31 ... R–R3

Marshall–Showalter, 1909

32 P–K5! Q–R2, 33 R × P P–N3, 34 R × R Black resigns

Now Marshall was officially the chess champion of the United States, an honor he had doggedly sought and subsequently wore with more pride than any titleholder (with the possible exception of Walter Browne). Despite an almost free-spirited attitude towards chess and life, the title caused Marshall some immediate discomfort. He even told a British newspaper, the *Daily Sketch*, in December 1909 that he was retiring. "The game is too absorbing," he said. "To play it one must devote to it all of his time. No game in the world calls for such deep study and devotion as chess, and while I love it, there are other things which must occupy my attention. I have private business responsibilities which suffer from the game, so I have quit playing for good."

Of course, he didn't retire. Marshall played chess professional until the day he died, November 10, 1944. The championship title enabled him to consolidate a position of authority in chess: He wrote several books of his own games and of the leading Europeans. He gave periodic exhibition tours of the U.S. and played private matches with worthy (and sometimes unworthy but wealthy) opponents. And with the help of friends he had known at the Manhattan Chess Club, he founded another club—the Marshall Chess Club—in New York's Greenwich Village, where he lived with his wife Caroline. For perhaps the first time in American history, winning the U.S. chess title had an important, beneficial effect on a man's life.

Marshall vs. Lasker

It's ironic that despite his possession of the title for 27 years and his extensive tournament and match record, Frank Marshall only defended his championship once. This was against Edward Lasker in 1923 and proved to be of exceptional interest. There are no written records but it seems likely that more people saw the challenge match of that year than any other U.S. championship until 1984. This may not be so surprising since it was the most closely contested of any of the title matches from 1891 to 1952 and because it lasted a record two months and took place before crowds in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Long Island.

It was hard fought with seven games lasting more than 60 moves. And it was also an exciting match with the result in doubt until the 18th and final game. This in itself was a surprise because Marshall had been expected to polish off his challenger with ease. Yet while both contestants wrote extensively about the match, it remains one of the secrets of U.S. chess history. Few people remember the most evenly fought championship match or that the challenger in it was Edward Lasker.

Lasker (1885–1981), a distant relative of Emanuel Lasker, was one of the many new—and foreign—faces that populated the American chess scene in the 1920's. He was born in Berlin of a German father and American mother and had come to the United States in the opening months of World War I. A small, educated, excitable man, he made his way to Chicago—by way of the New York clubs—to earn $18 a week in the shipping room of Sears, Roebuck and Co.

But with chess lessons and his first English chess primer he made ends meet and was soon moving up in the business world, from mail order to manufacturing and eventually to inventing a breast pump for mother's milk. His sudden affluence left Lasker time for an occasional tournament and that usually meant the Western Chess Association's open championship, the forerunner of the modern U.S. Open. He won the event five years out of six, facing opposition from—among others—a Jackson Showalter then heading into his 60's.

During this period Lasker took out U.S. citizenship and tested his luck against the New Yorkers. At a small master tournament in 1922 he finished clear first, even though the well-known European grandmaster, David Janowsky, was then living in America and was invited. Today the tournament is remembered for the good showing by the "11-year-old wunderkind" Sammy Reshevsky, who knocked Janowsky out of competition. But at the time its significance was to give Lasker an Eastern audience and the support he needed for a challenge to Marshall in 1923.

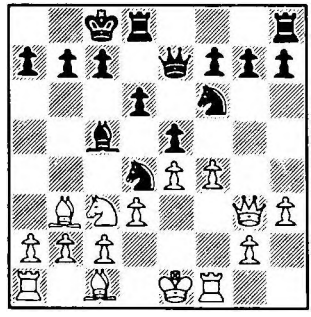
Marshall had not defended his title in 14 years, largely because he seemed so far ahead of anyone else. But Lasker noticed a flaw in the growing Marshall legend – the championship was decided by match play and Marshall was a "tournament player." That is, his risky style enabled him to score heavily against the minor masters at the bottom of a scoretable, thereby offsetting his problems with his more solid peers. In matches, Marshall had had trouble. Against Capablanca and Emanuel Lasker, the Great Swindler had scored only one win, 16 losses and 21 draws. Edward Lasker, years younger than the champion, thought he had a chance.

After nearly two years of negotiation on match conditions, play began at 8:30 p.m., March 15, 1923, before the muffled murmur of fans at the Marshall Chess Club, the champion's home ground. The club telephone had been disconnected to prevent interruption from the outside world, and a generally pro-Marshall audience awaited the first victory of their champion. But it wasn't to come easily – in fact, it didn't come at all in the three games held in New York.

Lasker adopted an unusual match strategy, playing conservatively with White and adventurously with Black – and uncompromisingly with both. The first three games took 28 hours and 235 moves to play, spread over six days. (By contrast, it took Bobby Fischer only 415 moves to win all his 11 games in the 1963–64 championship). The biggest surprise came in the second game when Marshall was caught in a tactical opening he knew very well:

Vienna Game
Second Game, New York, March 1923;
***white* Marshall, *black* Lasker**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-QB3 N-KB3, 3 B-B4 N-B3, 4 P-Q3 B-B4, 5 P-B4 P-Q3, 6 N-B3 B-KN5, 7 P-KR3 B × N, 8 Q × B N-Q5, 9 Q-N3!? Q-K2, 10 B-N3 0-0-0!!, 11 R-B1



After 11 R-B1

Marshall-Lasker, 1923

This variation had become famous—rather, notorious—after Mikhail Tchigorin won a brilliancy against Pillsbury at the great Hastings tournament of 1895 when the American accepted the piece sacrifice (9 ... N × P*ch*, 10 K–Q1 N × R, 11 Q × P R–KB1, 12 P × P P × P, 13 B–KR6). It had become a Marshall specialty, but Lasker was doing something very new.

11 ... N–B4!?

"I could see from the expression on Marshall's face that the sacrifice came to him as a complete surprise," Lasker later recalled. "I remember there was tremendous excitement among the onlookers, most of whom probably saw only that Marshall could not take the knight because the discovered check P × P would win the queen." After the referee restored order, Marshall recovered his composure and played:

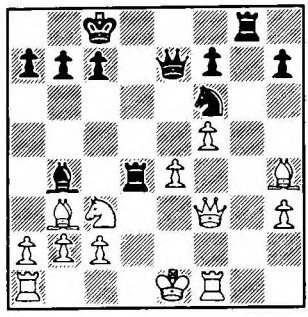
12 Q–N5 P–KN3!

Another a long think by Marshall, as he calculated 13 P × N P–KR3, 14 Q–R4 P × P*ch*, 15 K–Q1 P–KN4, 16 Q–K1 Q–Q2 and 17 ... KR–K1 with a strong attack along the open file. The next series was cleverly played by both sides, with Lasker seeking open lines and pressure on K5 and Marshall defending as best he could.

13 P × P Q × P, 14 Q–B4 Q–K2!, 15 P–KN4 P–Q4, 16 P × N P–KN4!, 17 Q–B3 P × P, 18 P × P B–N5, 19 B × NP! KR–N1, 20 B–R4 R–Q5

In his memoirs Lasker hints he was slighted by the pro-Marshall press, including the *New York Times* chess reporter who criticized his "showy" sacrifice as being made to "please the gallery." He also attacked the analyst for the *American Chess Bulletin*, who denigrated the knight offer and suggested defenses such as 21 R–Q1, which loses a piece to 21 ... R × P*ch*! What Lasker didn't say is that the *Times*-man and *Bulletin* annotator were the same person—and that person was match referee Hermann Helms.

Here Marshall misses his opportunity to make a fight of it with 21 B–K6*ch*! P × B, 22 P × P Q × P, 23 B × N when Black has questionable compensation after 23 ... R × P*ch*, 24 K–Q2 Q–Q4*ch*, 25 Q–Q3, R–N7*ch* and 26 ... Q × Q.



After 20 ... R-Q5

Marshall–Lasker, 1923 (2nd)

21 B-Q5? R-K1!, 22 B × N Q × B, 23 R-Q1 P-B3!, 24 R × R Q × R, 25 P-R3 B × N*ch*, 26 P × B Q × B, 27 Q-Q3 Q × P*ch*, 28 Q × Q R × Q*ch*, 29 K-Q2 R-KR5, 30 R-B3 K-Q2

This is the adjourned position, and probably a lost one for Marshall because of his bad pawns.

31 R-N3 R-R4, 32 R-N7 K-K2, 33 R-N8 R × BP, 34 R-N8 R-Q4*ch*, 35 K-B1 P-N3, 36 R-QB8 P-QB4, 37 R-B7*ch* R-Q2, 38 R-B6 P-B4, 39 R-R6 K-B1, 40 R-R5 P-KB5!, 41 R-R4 P-B6, 42 R-B4*ch* R-B2, 43 R × R*ch* K × R, 44 K-Q2 K-K3, 45 K-K3 K-Q4, 46 K × P K-B5, 47 K-N4 K × P, 48 K-N5 K × P, 49 K-R6 K-N6, 50 K × P P-B5 and White resigns.

But when the match moved to the Midwest in April Marshall came alive. At the Hamilton Club in Chicago, Marshall began with his two straight wins, including his most impressive victory of the match. Lasker regained the lead when Marshall tried too hard for a swindle in the sixth game but lost it back in the seventh. Lasker's account of this last game paints it as the turning point of the match:

Having adjourned a slightly inferior position as White the challenger had breakfast the next morning when "I was suddenly seized with the most excruciating abdominal pains." Rushed unconscious to Walter Reese Hospital, he found doctors diagnosing his condition as a kidney attack and prescribing several days in bed. From there he asked for a delay, citing the match rules which allowed postponement of scheduled games for up to seven days because of certified illness. But according to Lasker, Marshall objected, saying that the match rules did not apply to adjournments.

When the match umpire, Alrick Man—a Marshall Chess Club official—did not respond to a wire from the Chicago organizers, Lasker

told his doctor "that I had to leave the hospital at all costs." His account, in *Chess Secrets I Learned from the Masters*, has him ignoring doctor's advice, ordering a cab and "barely" managing "to drag myself to the chess table" for the adjournment, which he then lost.

The account is slightly suspect since, according to other sources, including Helms' *Bulletin*, Lasker was in the hospital for two days and the adjournment was postponed for three at his request. In any event, the match moved on and Marshall established a two-point lead with victories in the 10th game at the Cleveland City Club and the 12th at the Detroit Chess and Checker Club. Lasker said his game and health continued to suffer in the match's final stages. But his greatest problem may have been his endgame play, as Marshall repeatedly outplayed his opponent, scoring wins from slightly favorable positions and holding bad ones once queens were off the board.

Lasker managed another victory in the 14th game, in Baltimore, but couldn't find the tying point when the match wound up in early May at Washington, Long Island, and, finally, at the Marshall Club, May 11–12. Only then was it appreciated how critical was Marshall's charge in April, when he scored five wins to Lasker's one. It began with this:

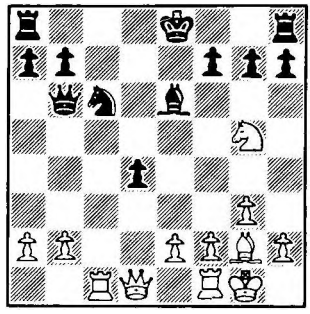
Queen's Gambit Declined
Fourth Game, Chicago, April 2, 1923;
***white* Marshall, *black* Lasker**

1 P-Q4 P-Q4, 2 N-KB3 P-K3, 3 P-B4 P-QB4, 4 P × QP KP × P, 5 N-B3 N-QB3, 6 P-KN3 N-B3, 7 B-N2

The match seemed at times to be a debate on the merits of the Tarrasch Defense (3 ... P-QB4), which Lasker championed. He equalized easily with it in the sixth game after 7 ... B-K2, 8 0-0 0-0, 9 B-N5 B-K3, 10 P × P B × P, 11 R-B1 B-K2, 12 N-Q4 N × N, 13 Q × N Q-R4, 14 P-QR3 QR-B1, 15 Q-Q3 P-KR3. Marshall then hallucinated with 16 P-QN4? Q × RP, 17 N × P thinking that he would win material with the twin threats of N × B*ch* or Q × Q. But he overlooked 17 ... B × P!, protecting both, and then overlooked 18 B × N? R × R which cost him an exchange. Still, he played it out, seeking swindle, and very nearly had one: 19 Q-K4 R × R*ch*, 20 B × R B × N, 21 Q-N4! P-KN3, 22 P-K4 B-K3, 23 Q-R4 Q-KB6, 24 B-K2!? Q × KB!, 25 Q × P Q-K8*ch*, 26 K-N2 Q × KP*ch*, 27 K-N1 Q-N8*ch*, 28 K-N2 B-Q4*ch*, 29 P-B3 B × P*ch*! and White resigns (30 K × B Q-B8*ch* and 31 ... Q × B; 30 K-B2 B-B4*ch*)

Lasker also got the edge in the eighth game but couldn't convert his advantage and was ground down in the tenth. He never returned to the Tarrasch again in the match.

7 ... B-K3, 8 0-0 B-K2, 9 P × P B × P, 10 B-N5 P-Q5?!, 11 B × N Q × B, 12 N-K4 Q-K2, 13 N × B Q × N, 14 R-B1 Q-N3, 15 N-N5!



After 15 N-N5

Marshall–Lasker, 1923 (4th)

White's lead in development is substantial and few men knew how to handle an initiative as well as Marshall — even in a "positional" opening. Here he opens up his good bishop diagonal and prepares to hop around with his knight.

After the game, Lasker said he should have played 15 ... B × P with a "doubtful outcome" after 16 Q-Q3 P-KR3, 17 B × N*ch* P × B, 18 Q-K4*ch* K-B1. he also suggested 15 ... 0-0-0. But years later he decided that 15 ... 0-0 "was the only continuation to consider." And Marshall recommended 15 ... B-Q2. What Lasker did was to walk into a fine combination.

15 ... B-B4?, 16 P-K4!! P × P *e.p.*?, 17 R × N! P × R, 18 Q-Q6 B-Q2, 19 Q-K5*ch* K-B1, 20 P × P

The threat is 21 R × P*ch* and if 20 ... B-K1 there is a knight check at K6.

20 ... P-B3, 21 R × P*ch*! P × R, 22 Q × P*ch* K-K1, 23 Q × R*ch* K-K2, 24 Q-K5*ch*! K-Q1, 25 P-KR4! K-B1, 26 N-B7 P-QR4?, 27 N-Q6*ch* K-N1, 28 N-N5*ch*? K-B1, 29 N-Q6*ch* K-N1, 30 Q-K7?

White could have finished off in style with 30 N-B4*ch* Q-B2, 31 N-N6! (or 28 N-B4*ch* for that matter). After the text Black has survival chances with 30 ... R-R2. Lasker later claimed a draw for Black with the rook

move but later changed his mind. In any event, Marshall now chases the enemy king up the board.

30 ... Q–B2?, 31 Q–B8*ch* K–R2, 32 N–N5*ch*! K–N3, 33 Q × R K × N, 34 B–B1*ch* K–N5, 35 Q–B8*ch* P–B4, 36 Q–N7! P–B5, 37 K–R2 Q–B3, 38 Q–B3*ch* K–N4, 39 Q–N3*ch*! Black resigns.

Marshall	0	0	½	1	1	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	0	½	½	½	½ = 9½
Lasker	1	1	½	0	0	1	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	1	½	½	½	½ = 8½

Within months Lasker had rebounded in health and spirits and wanted a rematch on about the same terms—which included at least 50 percent of the proceeds for the champion regardless of the match result if they managed to raise more than $3,000. But Marshall wanted the challenger to deposit whatever stakes there were with a third party before play began. Lasker responded that no one would put up cash beforehand—and that a mere pledge from the various fundraisers was all that was needed in the 18-game marathon they had played earlier in the year. "Instead of making easier terms, you have made harder ones," Lasker wrote to him in November, "and most of the influential chess people I have interviewed since the receipt of your letter are of the opinion that your terms are equivalent to making a return match with you impossible." But Marshall was seeking his own rematch with world champion Capablanca, who insisted on the same cash-deposit terms for all his challengers.

And that was that. In succeeding months all attention was focused on the great international tournament held at New York's Alamac Hotel in the spring of 1924 and the U.S. title was forgotten. Marshall scored a solid fourth place at the Alamac and Lasker, invited almost entirely on the basis of the Marshall match, was outclassed and finished 10th in a field of 11.

The genial amateur lost interest in the championship and played less and less. He was soon supplanted as Marshall's chief rival by a young man who first gained attention by winning a problem-solving contest held during New York 1924. That 18-year-old problem solver was Isaac Kashdan.

Lasker was never again a major contender—although he did spark a good deal of controversy in 1946 when he and a few other top players nearly took personal control over the new U.S. championship tournament. In his final years Lasker was a benign, grandfather-like figure who took pride in his away-from-board achievements—such as being president of the Marshall Chess Club

As for Marshall, there were no more challengers for the title. He abdicated in 1936, after three decades and one defense as champion. Said Marshall of his decision: "Many youthful contenders for the crown had arisen, and I felt they had deserved a fair chance. It was time to step aside and make way for new blood...." He had enjoyed it all very much indeed.

Chapter Six

The Reshevsky Years (1936–1942)

"The advantage of a tournament seems to lie in the fact that several aspirants for the title can have their opportunity to win it and that the issue will necessarily be decided in a comparatively short time. A tournament also is distinctly more interesting...." With these words in December 1935, Frank Marshall resigned as U.S. champion and urged the adoption of regularly scheduled tournaments to choose his successors. The idea of a tournament had been kicking around American chess circles for years but no one had a clear idea of what such an event would mean. How many of the nation's best players would be willing to compete—to give up jobs and family for several weeks in hopes of winning a $600 first prize? How would the entrants be chosen? How could the event be financed? And, perhaps most important, wouldn't it mean a new champion every time a tournament was held – a revolving door title?

The last question was pertinent because the revival of tournament championships coincided with one of those periodic explosions of native chess talent. There was not just one claimant to Marshall's title, but several. At least three young masters were considered the Old Swindler's equal. Another half dozen were rated of international caliber—the kind who could very easily win a strong round-robin championship tournament if they were the beneficiaries of a strong start and a bit of luck.

The idea of a tournament was a logical one but also a necessary way out of the problem posed by Marshall's age and the hard times of the Depression. Since 1931, when 26-year-old Isaac Irving Kashdan was placed ahead of Marshall on first board of the U.S. Olympic team, it had become obvious that the holder of the championship title was no longer the best player in the country. Attempts to arrange a Marshall–Kashdan match were periodically launched and abandoned, all victims of the economic climate and the champion's conditions. Marshall wanted a

guaranteed prize fund of $5,000. After all, Emanuel Lasker had demanded—and gotten—arrangements for his last world championship match such that he went home with 55 percent of the $20,000 prize fund even though he resigned the match halfway through it. Didn't Marshall deserve a comparable retirement fund, he wondered?

But the Marshall–Kashdan match organizers could raise no more than $900. And with the sparkling successes in Europe by Sammy Reshevsky in 1935 and the quick progress of young rivals such as Reuben Fine and Arthur Dake, it made sense to drop the match completely and devote the organizers' energies and treasury towards the first modern championship tournament. In late 1935 Harold Phillips, a veteran Manhattan Chess Club leader whose personal relations with top players stretched back to a close friendship with Wilhelm Steinitz, helped persuade Marshall to step aside and relinquish his title. The title, and a "Frank Marshall championship trophy," would go to the winner of a round-robin tournament to be held the following spring.

All of the contenders on the eve of the March, 1936, event were relatively young. Kashdan was 30, Reshevsky gave his age as 25, Fine was only 21. They were the grandmaster elite of U.S. chess and each would have a series of European successes and some world championship hopes. Just below them in stature were another crop of young masters—22-year-old Arnold Denker, 26-year-old Dake, 28-year-old I.A. "Al" Horowitz and 30-year-old Herman Steiner. Of the few others who could be considered of possible champion caliber were Marshall, 58; his 1923 challenger, Edward Lasker, then 50; and Abraham Kupchik, 44, a Manhattan Chess Club regular nearing the end of a vigorous career. Marshall and Lasker declined invitations to play in the tournament, leaving their places to a younger generation that would dominate the championship for 15 years.

Of the tournament entrants, the young magazine *Chess Review* wrote, "none can boast of as imposing a record as Isaac Kashdan." Up to then "Kash" had played in 11 international tournaments, scoring four first-places and five seconds. He led the U.S. Olympic team four times, twice to the gold medals, and had racked up a remarkable personal record in team play—40 wins, 20 draws and only four losses. He was being talked of as a challenger to champion Alexander Alekhine for the world title, and had scored six draws and only one loss in his seven meetings with the then almost unbeatable Alekhine.

On the other hand, Reuben Fine, fresh out of college, had played just once as an individual abroad. But his easy victory at Hastings, England, three months before the 1936 national tournament was no less impressive than any of Kashdan's victories. Fine, who had won the

championship of the Marshall Chess Club three times and the Western Open once, liked to say he had never read a chess book until he had become a master. But he made up for his lack of book knowledge by playing several hours a day, seven days a week during his high school years. A restless energy characterized his play and it was also revealed by his constant walking back and forth across a tournament hall ("sentry-wise" as it was described) while his opponent was thinking.

But if there was a slight favorite in 1936 it was neither Kashdan nor Fine but Sammy Reshevsky. He had been the best-known of the American players ever since his highly publicized tours as a reputed nine-year-old chess prodigy shortly after his family brought him from Poland to America in 1920. The boy had met President Harding, played members of Congress and, as recorded in one memorable photograph, played 20 West Point cadets simultaneously. (Sammy, dressed in a sailor suit, didn't lose a game.)

In his new country Reshevsky went into a brief chess retirement and graduated from college with a degree in accounting. Almost all the leading masters held at least part-time jobs—Kashdan sold insurance, Horowitz sold insurance and edited *Chess Review*, and Reshevsky was preparing for a business career. Yet when Sammy began to play again in 1934 he seemed to have hardly been away from the board. Because so many of the championship contenders lived in and around New York City, his winning a first prize ahead of them in the state congress at Syracuse in 1934 established Reshevsky as one of the two or three best players in America. Sammy added international laurels a year later when, on his first return to Europe in 14 years, he won a solid tournament at Margate, England, ahead of Capablanca.

Physically small, Reshevsky was a scrappy fighter at the chess-board—and a worthy match for Fine's own aggressive nature. Later in 1936 at the great international tournament in Nottingham, England, their individual game dragged on with Reshevsky holding the better of a draw while Fine sarcastically commented on the position. Eventually tournament officials had to intervene to avoid what they feared would end up in a fistfight between the two American representatives. Kashdan, on the other hand, seemed calm and cool, and many of his colleagues would agree with Sidney Bernstein who called Kash a "great player, but lacking in the iron determination of a Reshevsky."

So Reshevsky was a slight favorite in the first modern championship. But who could say with certainty how a single 15-round event would turn out? Also, it would be followed two years later by another championship, and then another two years after that. Perhaps the rapidly-improving Fine would win the first event. Or maybe Reshevsky in 1936

and then Kashdan in 1938. Or one of the others such as Dake, Steiner, Denker or Horowitz? Who would have thought that one man would dominate the championships, winning every tournament (and one title match) that he entered in the next 10 years?

1936: The First Last Round

The first modern championship set the tone and many of the recurring themes of the tournaments of the 1930s and '40s. The organizers had planned for a substantial number of entries, to be split into preliminary round-robins that would select eight qualifiers for the 16-man finals. The eight qualifiers would meet eight seeded players—Reshevsky, Fine, Dake, Kashdan, Kupchik, Steiner, Horowitz and Manhattan Chess Club Champion Alexander Kevitz. But so few advance entries for the preliminaries were received that the organizers had to drop the registration fee from $10 to $5. Eventually 48 players entered.

All games, preliminaries and finals, were held in New York, and this was simply a matter of convenience. Eleven of the finalists were from New York and most of the high-placing nonqualifiers were also from the metropolitan area. The few strong out-of-towners included Steiner, Illinois state champion Samuel Factor, Boston's Harold Morton and the colorful New England champ Weaver Adams, who insisted that 1 P–K4 simply won by force and who had begun to write a never-ending stream of articles and pamphlets to prove it.

But a spectator who paid 50 cents at the Hotel Astor grill to see one of the early rounds would have been interested most in the play of two unheralded New Yorkers and of a sometime resident of the city. The New Yorkers were George Nelson Treysman and Albert C. Simonson. Treysman, then 55, had never played in a tournament before but was in fact probably the most experienced player in the event. He was a professional coffeehouse player, earning dimes at speed and offhand games—often after conceding up to queen odds—at one of the many rundown East Side clubs that flourished in Manhattan. Simonson, the youngest player in the tournament, was an unknown who had played almost half of his chess at the Manhattan Chess Club and was recognized as one of the better bridge and backgammon players in the city.

The third attraction was Dake. While Treysman and Simonson eventually finished surprisingly well, Dake appeared destined to finish nothing short of clear first. The dapper Portland, Oregon, master already had earned an international reputation (and a special medal) when he amassed the best score—13 wins, 5 draws—in the Olympiad team tour-

nament the previous year in Warsaw. Dake, whose original name was Dakowski, was, like Reshevsky and Kupchik, of Polish heritage and this led another Pole, Savielly Tartakower, to remark about the American victory at Warsaw: "Our victories are everywhere."

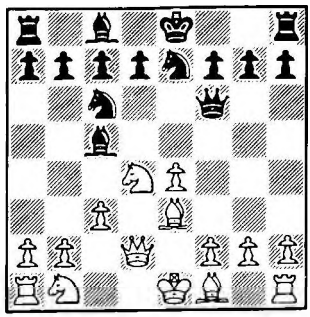
Dake also had defeated Steiner of Los Angeles, in a match for the Pacific Coast championship a few months before, but was accorded a more impressive role when he visited New York in March. The visitor was asked to play for the Marshall club in the annual match against the rival Manhattan Chess Club—and he was on first board, ahead of Fine, Marshall, and Reshevsky. (A strong team, yet the Manhattanites with Horowitz, Simonson, Kupchik and Kevitz won the match.)

Dake and Kashdan took off like a shot in the 1936 championship, winning game after game. Kashdan led at first with a perfect 4–0 score, followed by Treysman a half point back. But both men were upset the next day and Dake assumed sole first place. By Round 9 he had collected five wins and four draws, with no losses, and seemed to be fulfilling his promise.

Where was Reshevsky? "For me," he later wrote, "the tournament will long remain something of a nightmare." Sammy knew he had to win about half his games but also to lose not more than two games. Three losses meant almost certain elimination in the race for first place. Yet after a win and a draw in the first two rounds he blundered badly against the wily Bernstein and was completely outplayed by Horowitz in Round 4. And when Reshevsky did resume his battle for first he was the beneficiary of an extraordinary letdown from one of the main contenders:

Scotch Game
***white* Kashdan, *black* Reshevsky**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 P-Q4!? P × P, 4 N × P B-B4, 5 B-K3 Q-B3, 6 P-QB3 KN-K2, 7 Q-Q2



After 7 Q-Q2

Kashdan-Reshevsky, 1936

A strange choice of openings by today's standards. But the Scotch had enjoyed a fling of popularity shortly before this game and probably appealed to Kashdan's preference for simple, open positions. Here the move 7 ... P–Q4 had been known since the 1860's as an antidote to White's unusual 7 Q–Q2. The theorists believed Black could sacrifice heavily for the attack after 7 ... P–Q4, 8 P × P N × P, 9 N–N5 B × B, 10 P × B B–K3, 11 P–B4 N(4)–N5!, 12 N × P*ch* K–K2, 13 N × R R–Q1 or 8 N–N5 B × B, 9 P × B 0–0. Reshevsky gets the right idea but in the wrong sequence.

7 ... B × N?!, 8 P × B P–Q4, 9 N–B3! P × P, 10 P–Q5!

Reshevsky probably counted on acquiring a grip of the white squares after 9 P–K5 Q–N3 or 9 N–B3 P × P, 10 N × P Q–N3. Now his pieces become seriously dislodged from their mutual support. And, a third loss in a tournament barely half over would snuff out all hopes of first prize.

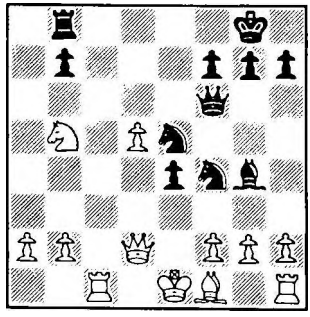
10 ... N–K4, 11 N–N5 0–0

There was no real choice. Black is overrun after 11 ... K–Q1, 12 P–Q6.

12 N × BP R–N1, 13 B × P?

Such an obvious and consistent move deserves a better fate. This move hurts because Kashdan didn't consider the full strength of Black's counterattack with two powerfully centralized knights. He should have delayed any material gain in order to push Black around with 13 B–KN5 Q–Q3, 14 N–N5! followed by P–Q6, e.g. 14 ... Q–Q2, 15 P–Q6 N(2)–B3, 16 0–0–0!

13 ... B–N5, 14 B × R R × B, 15 N–N5 N(2)–N3, 16 R–B1 N–KB5!



After 16 ... N–KB5

Kashdan–Reshevsky, 1936

White's king is caught in the center and faced with a big knight check on Q3. He must try to return material.

17 R-B3 N(4)-Q6*ch*, 18 B × N P × B!

The winning move. Now 19 ... R-K1*ch* and 20 ... R-K7 or 19 ... N × P*ch* inflict heavy damage. White cannot castle safely because 19 ... Q-N4! will then threaten to win the queen with 20 ... N-R6*ch* as well as to mate via 19 ... B-B6. 20 P-KN3 N-R6. Kashdan held out for only 11 moves:

19 0-0 Q-N4, 20 P-KR4 N-R6*ch*, 21 P × N Q × Q, 22 P × B Q-K7!, 23 R-B4 P-Q7, 24 R-Q4 Q × N, 25 R-Q1 R-K1, 26 R(4) × P R-K5, 27 P-B3 R-K7, 28 R-QB1 P-R4, 29 R(B)-B2 Q-N3*ch* and White resigns.

The first of many remarkable Reshevsky recoveries and of several hard fought championship games with Kashdan.

After his disastrous start Reshevsky became a new man. He won nine and drew only once in the next ten games. Fine, on the other hand, had not been able to extricate himself from a mire of draws, while Dake suddenly fell apart. The Oregonian scored only two points in his final six games—beginning with a depressing loss to Reshevsky in a lengthy end-game grind.

But Simonson's late surge was nearly as remarkable as Reshevsky's. His only previous claim to fame was a mediocre performance on one of the U.S. Olympiad teams. But here in the strongest event of his life, the young master defeated Morton, Fine, Bernstein, Horowitz, Denker and Milton Hanauer in successive rounds. Treysman also had a surprising string of successes, beating Denker, Hanauer, Factor, and Kashdan in a row before losing to Reshevsky. On the next to last round he knocked off the fading Dake. And the final round began on May 16th with these standings: Reshevsky and Simonson 11, Treysman 10½, and Fine 9½.

The key pairings insured an exciting finish: Kupchik vs. Reshevsky, Simonson vs. Factor, and Treysman vs. Fine. In their brief tournament experience the future grandmasters Fine and Reshevsky had learned how to wait. That day they played cautiously with the Black pieces knowing that a draw might turn out to be as useful as a win. When Kupchik developed slowly in a quiet English, Reshevsky began to make his move on the kingside. Meanwhile, Fine was neatly repulsing Treysman's bold opening—which, if successful, might have given him first prize.

The other leader, Simonson, was not cautious either. He had White and a chance for immortality as well as a six-win streak:

English Opening
white Simonson, *black* Factor

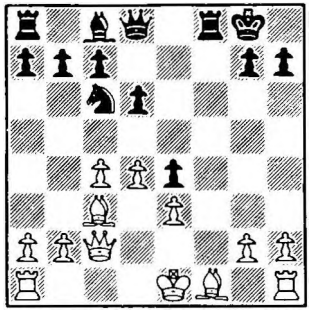
1 P-QB4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 N-B3 P-B4, 4 P-Q4 P-K5, 5 N-Q2

Today White's best strategy is known to be 5 B-N5 so that his bishop is placed outside the pawn structure he will solidify with P-K3. But Simonson hurries to attack Black's KP with P-KB3 and therefore doesn't want to part with the piece that best defends K3, his QB.

5 ... B-N5, 6 P-K3 N-B3, 7 P-B3 0-0, 8 P × P N × KP!, 9 N(2) × N P × N

White is already faced with the prospect of being overrun on the kingside (10 ... Q-B3 or 10 ... Q-N4). He prepares to win the KP hoping that will solve all his problems.

10 B-Q2 B × N!, 11 B × B P-Q3, 12 Q-B2



After 12 Q-B2

Simonson–Factor, 1936

12 ... B-N5!

Now Simonson has no choice but to grab the KP because he can no longer castle quietly (13 B-K2 Q-R5*ch*, 14 P-N3 Q-N4). And he has no other plan.

13 Q × P Q-R5*ch*, 14 P-N3 Q-R4

Here the threats are 15 ... B-B6 as well as 15 ... QR-K1. Simonson makes the best of a bad lot by entering an inferior endgame. Treysman also had a bad endgame at this point with Fine, while Reshevsky was on

the verge of winning material in his game. Unfortunately for Simonson, his opponent was one of the best Americans at consolidating a clear positional advantage. There followed:

15 Q-Q5*ch* Q × Q, 16 P × Q B-B6, 17 R-KN1 B × P, 18 B-N2 B × B, 19 R × B QR-K1, 20 R-K2 P-Q4!, 21 K-Q2 R-K5!, 22 P-QR4 P-QR4, 23 R-R3?! P-QN3, 24 R-N3 R-B4, 25 K-Q3 K-B2, 26 B-K1? N × P!

And White lost the exchange (27 R-B3 N × R, 28 R × P*ch* R-K2 or 27 P × N R-B6*ch*) and saw his game and chances for the title end on the 60th move.

Reshevsky, watching this, agreed to a draw in a position he could have won if the point were needed, while Fine, looking ahead to 1938, finished off Treysman and tied him for third place. Next time Fine would play more aggressively.

1938: Chess in Radio City

When the second championship tournament opened two years later, Fine and Reshevsky were no longer just promising young players. Both had earned international laurels that rivaled, or exceeded, Kashdan's. Fine in particular had made a name for himself in Europe, where he lived much of 1937-1938. After tying for third place with Reshevsky at the great Nottingham tournament of 1936, he had finished first at Moscow, Ostend, Margate and Stockholm in 1937 and then tied for first prize ahead of all the world's best players at the AVRO supertournament. Also in 1937 he had been selected by world champion Max Euwe to be his second in Euwe's title defense against Alexander Alekhine—quite a tribute for a 23-year-old.

Reshevsky had also played abroad, scoring impressive results in 1937 at Kemeri and Hastings. Kashdan, his European exploits in the past, stuck to New York. But Kash was clearly dominant there in the city that then had a virtual monopoly on America's strong players. In 1938 he won the Manhattan Chess Club tournament again and, even more impressively, crushed Simonson 4-0 in a brief match. The three grandmasters—Fine, Reshevsky and Kashdan—were the prohibitive favorites of the 1938 U.S. championship.

The tournament was worthy of the players. Organizers had rented out the Radio City Auditorium, a neatly appointed space on the seventh floor of the RCA Building in the glistening new Rockefeller Center

First U.S. Championship Tournament, New York, April 25–May 16, 1936

	R	S	F	T	K	D	K	K	H	F	D	S	B	H	A	M	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Reshevsky	X	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	10	3	2	11½–3½
2. Simonson	½	X	1	1	0	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	4	2	11–4
3–4. Fine	½	0	X	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	1	10½–4½
3–4. Treysman	0	0	0	X	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	9	3	3	10½–4½
5. Kashdan	0	1	0	0	X	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9	2	4	10–5
6–7. Dake	0	½	½	0	½	X	1	½	½	1	1	0	½	1	1	1	6	6	3	9–6
6–7. Kupchik	½	½	½	½	0	0	X	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	5	8	2	9–6
8. Kevitz	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	X	1	0	1	0	1	½	1	1	5	5	5	7½–7½
9. Horowitz	1	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	X	1	0	1	½	1	0	½	4	6	5	7–8
10. Factor	0	1	½	0	0	0	0	1	0	X	½	1	0	1	1	½	5	3	7	6½–8½
11–12. Denker	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	X	1	½	1	1	½	4	4	7	6–9
11–12. Steiner	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	1	0	0	0	X	1	½	1	1	5	2	8	6–9
13. Bernstein	1	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	0	X	½	0	0	2	6	7	5–10
14. Hanauer	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	X	1	½	2	5	8	4½–10½
15–16. Adams	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	X	1	3	0	12	3–12
15–16. Morton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	1	½	0	X	1	4	10	3–12

complex of midtown Manhattan. From comfortable leather chairs the 17 finalists would make moves that were quickly translated on giant wallboards which became the focus of attention of scores of well-dressed spectators. The lure of seeing top-flight chess played in such an impressive setting attracted an audience that included Emanuel Lasker and three veterans of U.S. title matches—65-year-old John Barry, 76-year-old Albert Hodges, and Marshall—as well as newsreel cameramen, reporters and chess fans. "No American tournament, I think has ever aroused so much popular enthusiasm," wrote Fred Reinfeld, the prolific chess author who was then fighting for an even score.

The finalists were 10 seeded players plus seven who qualified from a confused preliminary stage marred by several withdrawals and forfeited games. The survivors from the preliminaries included Reinfeld, young Marshall Chess Club star Anthony Santasiere, and other youngsters such as 19-year-old Walter Suesman and 20-year-old George Shainswit. But otherwise the field was pretty much the same as had competed two years before—talented amateurs and professionals in their 20s or 30s, most of whom lived in New York. In fact 11 of the 17 finalists had played in the big local event of the year, the Manhattan-Marshall chess clubs match shortly before the championship.

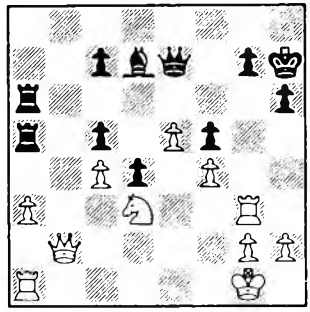
Reshevsky avoided the disastrous start of his first title event two years before and soon assumed the lead. The time limit had been speeded up to 40 moves in two hours (a half hour less than in 1936) and Sammy was in time pressure almost every game. But his play was so firm and sure that it didn't seem to matter: In one early round Harold Morton, playing White, was completely tied up after the opening and as a result had even less time than Reshevsky—just seconds with 10 moves to go. When Reshevsky delivered his 31st move—31 ... Q-K7 *mate*—the New Englander grabbed his king to move it, swirled it around wildly looking for a square and only then realized it had none.

This year Fine stayed with Reshevsky to the end. His score was uneven—scoring more wins than anyone, 11, but also losing two games. Fine managed to knock off many of the weaker players easily while Reshevsky had to concede four draws to them. Both men also went through the other contenders like machines, each silencing Kashdan and Dake. But Fine made two slips—losses to Santasiere and to public school teacher Milton Hanauer, who had a horrible position at move 20 but managed to turn the tables when Fine misjudged the endgame. One move by Fine would have forced the win of two pawns, another would hand over a powerful initiative. Fine miscalculated, overlooking a simple capture in one key variation, and lost a valuable point in 68 moves.

The race for first place was close for much of the way. After 10

rounds Fine and Reshevsky were tied at 8½–1½ while Kashdan stood at 8–1 with a bye—that is, an earlier free day caused because there was an odd number of finalists. But a loss to Suesman on the Black side of a Bishop's Gambit was the beginning of the end for Kash, who "seemed to be handicapped by a lack of interest," according to *Chess Review*.

In the final week, Reshevsky pulled out ahead with a string of impressive results. Unlike 1936 he didn't lose a game. Also, his play was much smoother, always keeping the position under control. His demolition of Dake, whose business career had left him rusty, was typical of a maturing Reshevsky. In many ways it was the game of the tournament:



Dake–Reshevsky, 1938
After 45 R–R1

Black's bishop and stronger pawns have given him an advantage Reshevsky has toyed with for the last 20 moves. Lengthy maneuvering failed to crack Dake's defense of the QRP and of the kingside, especially the key target, White's KN2. But now Reshevsky realizes where his pieces will be optimally placed. His bishop should not be on the QN2–KN7 diagonal, but on K3 where it attacks the QBP. Then, a frontal assault on the weak QRP will force White to give ground.

45 ... B–K3!, 46 Q–B1 Q–B1!, 47 N–N2 Q–QR1

White's two weak pawns cannot be protected on their current squares and Dake is now forced to play P–QR4. While this seems only to enhance his game, actually it grants Reshevsky the big steppingstone he needs—the QN5 square. On that point he can attack both weak pawns with a rook and build up pressure.

48 P–QR4 R–N3!, 49 Q–B2 R–N5, 50 R–N3 Q–K5!

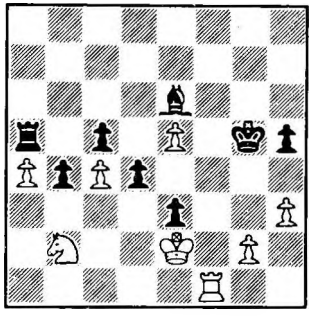
This powerful centralization forces White to turn Black's blocked pawn mass into an offensive force. Dake cannot avoid the exchange of queens

(51 Q–Q1 Q × BP; 51 R–QB1? Q × Q, 52 R × Q R × R), but worse, he cannot avoid the exchange of rooks that will give Black his third passed pawn.

51 Q × Q P × Q, 52 R × R P × R, 53 P–R3 P–R4, 54 R–K1 P–K6, 55 K–B1 P–N4!

Whether White captures this pawn or not, Black's king will now have a point of penetration — ... K–N3–B4–K5.

56 R–Q1 P–B4, 57 P × P K–N3, 58 K–K2 K × P, 59 R–KB1



After 59 R–KB1

Dake–Reshevsky, 1938

Black's threat was ... K–B4–K5 followed by breaking the blockade of his passed pawns by a well-timed ... P–Q6*ch*, e.g. 59 R–QR1 K–B4, 60 R–B1*ch* K–K5, 61 R–B6?! B × P*ch*, 62 N × B P–Q6*ch* and 63 ... R × P.

59 ... R × P!!

One of Reshevsky's finest combinations, perhaps his best ever in a championship. The passed pawns now go through.

60 P–R4*ch*! K–N5!, 61 N × R B × P*ch*, 62 K–K1

The point of White's interpolation, 60 P–R4*ch*, was to divert the Black king (60 ... K × P??, 61 R–R1*ch* and 62 N × R wins) and also to help create a passed pawn in this devilish variation: 62 ... B × R, 63 K × B K–B4, 64 N × P K × P, 65 P–N4! P × P, 66 P–R5 K–B4, 67 K–K2! and White can draw since Black's king must go after the passed KRP.

62 ... P–Q6!!

Second U.S. Championship Tournament, New York, April 2–24, 1938

	R	F	S	H	K	D	P	K	B	S	T	C	H	R	S	M	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Reshevsky	X	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	10	6	0	13–3
2. Fine	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	11	3	2	12½–3½
3. Simonson	0	½	X	1	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	8	6	2	11–5
4. Horowitz	½	0	0	X	½	1	½	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	7	6	3	10–6
5. Kashdan	0	0	½	½	X	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	1	0	8	3	5	9½–6½
6–7. Dake	0	0	½	0	1	X	1	0	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	6	6	4	9–7
6–7. Polland	0	½	½	½	0	0	X	1	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	6	6	4	9–7
8. Kupchik	½	0	1	½	0	1	0	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	0	1	5	7	4	8½–7½
9. Bernstein	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	0	1	1	4	7	5	7½–8½
10–11. Santasiere	0	1	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	X	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	3	8	5	7–9
10–11. Treysman	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	0	1	X	1	1	½	1	0	½	5	4	7	7–9
12–14. Cohen, S.	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	1	0	X	½	0	½	1	1	4	5	7	6½–9½
12–14. Hanauer	0	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	X	0	1	½	1	3	7	6	6½–9½
12–14. Reinfeld	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	X	0	½	1	3	7	6	6½–9½
15. Shainswit, G.	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	½	0	½	0	1	X	1	½	3	5	8	5½–10½
16. Morton	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	1	0	½	½	0	X	1	3	4	9	5–11
17. Suesman, W.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	X	1	2	13	2–14

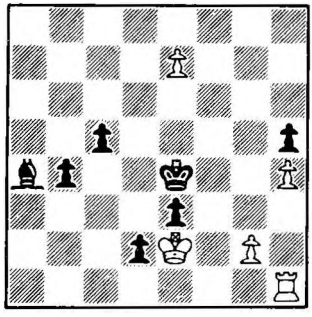
Reshevsky had to see this far when he sacrificed his rook. He will remain the exchange down but the force of his passed pawns is unlimited. The first threat, and a continuing one, is 63 ... P-Q7*ch*, queening.

63 R-R1 P-Q7*ch*, 64 K-Q1 B-N6*ch*, 65 K-K2 B x N, 66 P-K6 K-B4, 67 P-K7

Has White found a drawing line?: 67 ... K-K3, 68 P-K8(Q)*ch*! B x Q, 69 K x P.

67 ... K-K5!

The pawns cannot be stopped and, in fact, White is in danger of being mated when his king is shunted to Q1 and Black's king advances to support ... P-K7*ch*.



After 67 ... K-K5

Dake-Reshevsky, 1938

68 R-QN1 B-N4*ch*, 69 K-Q1 K-Q5! and White resigns.

The threat was 70 ... K-B6, but White is almost out of moves anyway, e.g. 70 R-N2 B-R5*ch*; 70 R-R1 K-Q6!

Fine's score was worthy of a first prize, and would have been good enough to earn him the Frank J. Marshall Championship trophy two years before. But Reshevsky had an even better tournament and found himself needing only a draw in the last round once again to take the title.

1940: Fine's Fatal(istic) Flub

It was only the third championship but it was already the last to bring Reuben Fine, Sammy Reshevsky and Isaac Kashdan together. All

three would remain active during the 1940s but never again would they all be competing in the same title event. Eventually Kashdan and Fine abandoned the chase and retired from tournament chess, leaving the field to Reshevsky, who held it until a new generation emerged after World War II.

That they remained fervent competitors for so long was a tribute to their thirst for the championship title. There still wasn't much financial reward in the game. The championship prize fund had not grown but in fact had been reduced between 1936 and 1938, and the organizers in 1940 sought—unsuccessfully—to drop first prize down to $400. (Compare this with the $600 *third* prize at the Sixth American Congress more than half a century before.)

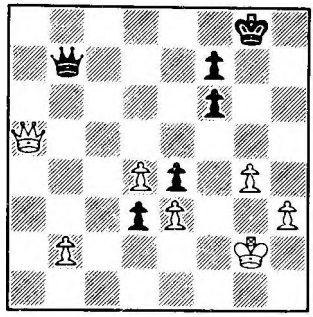
Some players, such as Simonson, found themselves devoting less and less time to chess because of the chronic need for making a living. And when, in 1938, the losing contenders asked the tournament organizing committee to return their $20 entry fees—since the tournament had ended with a slight profit on top of total expenses of $3600—they were politely refused. Times were hard.

Reshevsky later described the 1940 championship as a personal duel between him and Fine. It is true that their last-round game together was the big story of the tournament, and determined first prize, but calling it a duel would oversimplify. It would overlook, for example, the strong fourth-place finish of A.S. Pinkus, another Manhattan Chess Club regular who was returning to the game nearly a decade after he had scored several fine successes.

It would also ignore Kashdan's fiercest challenge to date. The 34-year-old Brooklynite, then raising a family and selling insurance, developed an early lead over another good field. After 12 rounds he still ran slightly ahead of Reshevsky. Fine was some distance back, having lost in the fifth round to the super-solid Kupchik. To maintain his hopes into the final few days Kashdan, with the White pieces, would have to score at least a half point in his Round 13 game with Reshevsky. A victory would virtually ice the tournament.

The two players gave a good account of themselves to one another in a vigorous Ruy Lopez with Kashdan building upon the kingside while Reshevsky opened up the center. Kashdan then exchanged minor pieces to obtain his beloved two bishops, but Reshevsky's two knights were so strong that even at the cost of a pawn he had the better chances. Then, after more exchanges, at move 37 there was nothing left but queens, kings and pawns.

A second game was beginning:



Kashdan–Reshevsky, 1940
After 37 ... Q–N2

Despite the number of pawns and their apparent weakness, it is their closeness to the eighth rank that counts most heavily in queen-and-pawn endings. Here Kashdan is in desperate straits because of the pregnant Black QP. For example, 38 Q–B3 Q–R1!, 39 P–N4 permits Black to push his pawn home with 39 ... Q–R7*ch* and 40 ... Q–QB7. White needs counterplay, and in this kind of ending that can only come from creating your own passed pawn—too late here—or from perpetual check.

38 Q–Q8*ch*! K–N2, 39 P–N5! P–B4

The perpetual was there after 39 ... P × P, 40 Q × P*ch* K–B1, 41 Q–Q8*ch*. But now, however, the position of White's own king would kill his chances after, say, 40 Q–B6*ch* K–N1, 41 P–N6 P–Q7!, 42 P × P*ch* Q × P, 43 Q–Q8*ch* K–R2, 44 Q–R4*ch* K–N2!, 43 Q–N3*ch* Q–N3! White has nothing useful to do but wait and hope that Black misplaces his queen.

40 K–B2 Q × P*ch*, 41 K–N3 Q–N2, 42 K–B2! K–R2, 43 P–R4?

After denying Black all the natural winning tries (42 ... P–Q7, 43 K–K2; 42 ... Q–N7*ch*, 43 K–N3 Q–K7, 44 Q–B6*ch*) White gets sloppy. With 43 Q–B6 the position is likely to be drawn.

43 ... P–B5!

Again, the number of pawns doesn't matter as much as their proximity to the queening square. Black's move threatens 44 ... Q–N7*ch* now that KN3 is covered and the move otherwise forces the creation of two passed pawns. The only criticism of 43 ... P–B5 is that Black would also have had excellent winning chances with the immediate 43 ... Q–N7*ch*, 44 K–N3 Q–K7, 45 P–N6*ch* K–N2!! There followed:

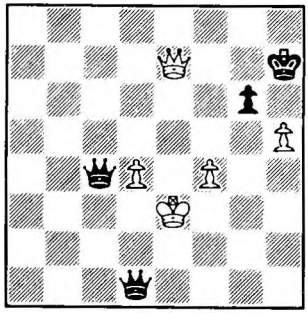
44 P × P P–Q7, 45 K–K2 P–K6, 46 Q–B6 K–N1, 47 Q–Q8*ch* K–R2, 48 Q–B6 Q–B2!

... after which Black threatens to check at QB5 and queen his pawn. He might have been able to queen under similar circumstances but with the queen at QB5 Black will also protect KB2 against perpetual check attempts. White has one last chance.

49 P–N6*ch*! P × P, 50 P–R5!!

This fine move secures a draw (50 ... P × P, 51 Q–B5*ch*) even though Black may get his second queen. One remarkable line that might have worked was 50 P–Q5 (closing the diagonal that leads to KB7) Q–B5*ch*, 51 K × P and now Black avoids checks and wins all the pawns with 51 ... P–N8(N)*ch*!, 52 K–Q2 Q × QP*ch*, 53 K–K1 N–N7!, 54 Q × N Q–R8*ch*. But the theoretical ending that results is very hard and probably drawn.

50 ... Q–B5*ch*, 51 K × P P–Q8(Q), 52 Q–K7*ch*



After 52 Q–K7*ch*

Kashdan–Reshevsky, 1940

Now the significance of 50 P–R5 is revealed. After 52 ... K–N1 White can draw with 53 Q–K8*ch* K–N2, 54 Q–K7*ch* Q–B2, 55 P–R6*ch*!, e.g. 55 ... K–N1, 56 P–R7*ch*! Q × P, 57 Q–K8*ch* followed by interminable checks at K7, N5, R6 or the eighth rank.

52 ... K–R3!, 53 Q–N5*ch* K–N2, 54 Q × P*ch*??

A terrible slip for White after playing so resourcefully. As soon as the game was over Reshevsky pointed out 54 Q–K7*ch* Q–B2, 55 P–R6*ch*! which leads to the drawing line mentioned above.

54 ... K–B1, 55 Q–Q6*ch* K–K1! and White resigns

Black's king walks to the queenside and safety. Kashdan was badly unnerved by this last-minute reversal. He lost the next day to a brillant Weaver Adams attack. Having led the tournament for two thirds of the way, Kash finally ended up two and a half points behind the winner.

But there was still Fine. He had overcome the Kupchik loss to pile up 10 wins and four draws—a score comparable to his 1938 finish. Reshevsky, who had shaken off an early illness, had rolled up a score of 10 wins and five draws. And Sammy had not lost a game in a championship since the fourth round in 1936. All he had to do to earn his third title was get by Fine on the final day.

Two Knights Defense
***white* Fine, *black* Reshevsky**

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 B–B4!? N–B3, 4 N–N5 P–Q4, 5 P × P N–QR4, 6 B–N5*ch* P–B3, 7 P × P P × P, 8 B–K2 P–KR3, 9 N–KB3 P–K5, 10 N–K5 B–Q3, 11 P–KB4

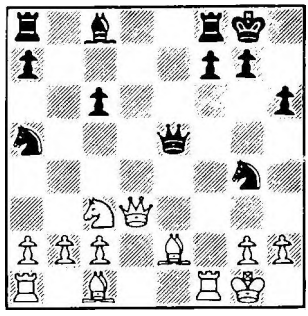
Fine began with a good—psychological—choice of opening: His opponent needed only to draw. But in this opening Black is virtually forced to sacrifice a pawn after 4 N–N5, and this places Reshevsky in the uncomfortable situation of having to play for sharp positions when he would prefer quiet ones. Also, he must do this in unfamiliar territory.

The recommended line, leading to rough equality, is 11 ... 0–0 which permits Black to regain his pawn after 12 N–QB3 R–K1, 13 0–0 B × N, 14 P × B Q–Q5*ch* and 15 ... Q × KP. In the line played, White doesn't have to play the somewhat useless K–R1 move.

11 ... Q–B2?!, 12 0–0 0–0, 13 N–QB3 B × N, 14 P × B Q × P, 15 P–Q4! P × P *e.p.*, 16 Q × P

Here White is a bit better developed than in the line cited above and has excellent prospects in the form of the two bishops and superior pawn structure. Black's QN is out of play but his other pieces are temporarily active. Reshevsky tries to make the most of the latter while Fine goes after the former.

16 ... N–N5



After 16 ... N–N5

Fine–Reshevsky, 1940

17 B–B4?!

Now the psychology begins to work against Fine. He sees that 17 B × N B × B, 18 B–B4 Q–B4*ch*, 19 K–R1 would give him a more fluid position than Black and fine winning chances. But the exchange also creates the possibility of an endgame with bishops of opposite color—a likely draw. To avoid that, and meet the threat of 17 ... Q × P *mate*, he makes an exchange sacrifice that, while promising, wasn't entirely necessary.

17 ... Q–B4*ch*, 18 K–R1 N–B7*ch*, 19 R × N Q × R, 20 R–KB1 Q–R5

The Black queen would be too far away from the center of action if it retreated to the queenside (20 ... Q–N3, 21 Q–N3! threatening 22 B–B7 and 22 B × RP).

21 Q–Q6! B–N5?

This brings Reshevsky to the brink of disaster. The tournament site was once again the Astor Hotel grill and many of the dozens of spectators there realized after White's next move that the defending champion had erred.

22 B–R6!

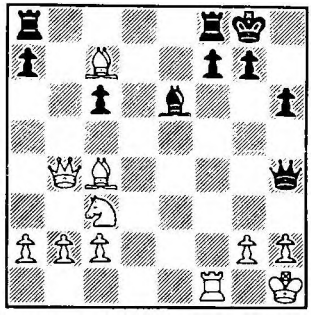
The Black bishop now is needed at K3 to help the knight back to civilization. The threat of 23 P–N4 or a queen attack on the knight forces Black to lose time. Fine plays skillfully on both sides of the board:

22 ... B–B1, 23 B–Q3! B–K3, 24 Q–N4 Q–R4, 25 B–B7! N–B5

This could almost be said to be desperation. The knight has been encircled and only tactics can rescue it. According to witnesses, Reshevsky was

in tears as he considered the hopelessness of the situation. Reinfeld, his good friend, called it the most miserable moment in Sammy's life.

26 B × N Q-R5



After 26 ... Q-R5

Fine–Reshevsky, 1940

Now 27 R-B4 will win Fine a United States championship. Black may get some counterplay with 27 ... Q-N4, 28 B × B P × B but Fine had consolidated much more difficult positions. It requires some quiet reorganization and a slow buildup to make his material count. However, Fine sees a more intricate try, involving three forcing moves followed by a powerful-looking move. After weighing the two alternatives, he decides against 27 R-B4!

27 B-B4??

"A miracle happened." – Reshevsky. "I must confess that I was overcome by the fatalistic feeling that nothing could possibly win for me." – Fine.

27 ... B × B, 28 Q × B P-N4, 29 P-KN3 Q-N5

All foreseen by Fine. But now he intended the knockout blow, 30 N-K4, which threatens 31 N-B6*ch*. Black must relinquish the pin on the fourth rank by moving his queen. And that would permit White to keep his two minor pieces for a rook under circumstances more favorable than after 27 R-B4. Two pieces for a rook usually win.

30 Q × P

But before he played 30 N-K4 Fine saw to his horror that Black has 30 ... Q-K3!! as an answer. After 31 Q × Q P × Q, for example, there is

Third U.S. Championship, New York, April 27–May 19, 1940

	R	F	K	P	S	K	D	B	P	R	S	A	S	G	H	W	L	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Reshevsky	X	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	10	6	0	13–3
2. Fine	½	X	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	5	1	12½–3½
3. Kashdan	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	½	7	7	2	10½–5½
4–5. Pinkus, A.	0	½	½	X	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	6	8	2	10–6
4–5. Simonson	½	0	0	0	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	4	4	10–6
6–7. Kupchik	0	1	0	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	6	7	3	9½–6½
6–7. Denker	0	½	0	1	½	½	X	1	0	½	0	1	1	1	½	1	1	7	5	4	9½–6½
8–11. Bernstein	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	X	1	½	½	0	0	1	0	1	1	5	5	6	7½–8½
8–11. Polland	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	0	X	1	½	1	½	0	1	0	½	4	7	5	7½–8½
8–11. Reinfeld	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	13	2	7½–8½
8–11. Shainswit	½	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	2	11	3	7½–8½
12–13. Adams	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	X	0	1	½	1	1	5	4	7	7–9
12–13. Seidman	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	1	X	½	½	1	1	4	6	6	7–9
14–15. Green, M.	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	½	0	½	X	½	1	½	2	8	6	6–10
14–15. Hanauer	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	2	8	6	6–10
16. Woliston, P.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	0	½	X	1	2	2	12	3–13
17. Littman, G.	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	⅓	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	X	0	4	12	2–14

a new pin, this time on the KB-file. And on 31 Q–Q4 Black plays 31 ... P–KB4!, 32 N–B5 Q–K7, 33 R–B2 Q–K8*ch*, 34 K–N2 P × B.

Fine had miscalculated. The win was gone:

30 ... P × B, 31 R × P Q–K3, 32 Q–B3 P–B4!, 33 Q–Q5 QR–K1, 34 K–N2 Q × Q*ch*, 35 N × Q R–K7*ch*, 36 R–B2 R × R*ch*, 37 K × R K–B2, 38 P–B4 P–QR4, 39 P–N3 R–K1, 40 P–QR3 R–QB1, 41 N–B3 K–K3, 42 K–K3 K–K4, 43 K–Q3 R–QN1, 44 N–N5 R–Q1*ch* 45 K–B2 P–R4, 46 P–QN4 P × P, 47 P × P P–R5!, 48 P–B5 P × P, 49 P × P K–Q4, 50 K–Q3 R–KN1

and the game was drawn in another dozen moves after seven hours of play. It was enough to discourage even Fine and he never entered another U.S. championship when Reshevsky was around.

1941: The Vagabond Match

One man who wasn't around for the third championship was Al Horowitz—he was lucky to be alive. In February 1940 the genial 32-year-old publisher of *Chess Review* had been on one of his periodic national exhibition tours with his close friend and coeditor, Harold Morton. One night while driving near Carrollton, Iowa, their car was caught in a tragic accident. Morton was killed instantly, Horowitz was severely injured.

Yet Horowitz quickly bounced back and within months had resumed his duties at the midtown Manhattan office of the magazine he had founded seven years before. *Chess Review* was never a financial success in those days—the sales of books and sets and Horowitz' tours were essential to keep it from bankruptcy. But it had grown into the nation's most popular chess magazine. Horowitz—"a super coffee house player," according to Sidney Bernstein—had earned a good deal of attention as a player. He won the U.S. Open in 1936 and shared first place in it with Kashdan two years later. Brimming with confidence and rapidly regaining his health, Horowitz decided in late 1940 that his big chance to wrest Reshevsky's more prestigious title was now. Rather than wait for the next tournament, two years off, he challenged Reshevsky to a match in the spring.

Reshevsky, of course, was the favorite, and had a slight plus-score against Horowitz in previous games. But the challenger had beaten him in the 1936 tournament and was one of a very few Americans to have defeated Reshevsky *anywhere* in the previous five years. Besides a healthy

prize fund the match may have held another attraction for Reshevsky: His results at home and abroad had made him (along with Fine) one of the half dozen likely candidates for the world championship title held by Alexander Alekhine. Alekhine was known to be fleeing from the European war zone and was reported to be on his way to America. It seemed likely at the time that the only world championship match that could be arranged until peacetime would be Reshevsky vs. Alekhine. And Reshevsky had never played any kind of match.

So, Horowitz would at least be good practice, Reshevsky's backers felt. They helped arrange a busy match schedule which would take the two players to seven different playing sites for 16 games in three weeks. Considering travel time, the match was scheduled so tightly that often the players had to rush from one site to another, and the event, as Reshevsky later said, "became a matter of endurance rather than chess generalship."

The first game was held at the penthouse home of Maurice Wertheim, a wealthy investment banker and publisher of the liberal monthly, *The Nation*. Wertheim had just been elected president of the Manhattan Chess Club and he invited most of the city's leading players and several visitors to his spacious apartment to see the first championship match game since 1923. More than 150 players—including the 1923 combatants, Marshall and Edward Lasker—turned out to see a hard-fought Queen's Gambit, the opening Reshevsky chose whenever he had the chance.

The first game was drawn, as were the next three, played at the Marshall and Manhattan clubs. But Reshevsky drew first blood when the challenger botched a King's Indian Defense in the fifth game. The match moved on to Philadelphia, then Lakewood, N.J., Binghampton, N.Y., and Washington, D.C. All games were drawn except the ninth, when Horowitz hung a pawn in a difficult position and was ground down in 82 moves.

At that point the champion enjoyed a 2–0 lead with only six games left. Horowitz continued to play 1 P–K4 but made little progress in a variety of Sicilian Defenses and Ruy Lopez's. To keep up with the schedule the players had to have a game virtually every day and the strain was beginning to be apparent on both players. For the 11th game the two weary opponents made their way back to New York's Staten Island.

Queen's Gambit Declined
white Reshevsky, *black* Horowitz

1 P–Q4 P–Q4, 2 P–QB4 P–QB3, 3 N–KB3 N–B3, 4 N–B3 P × P,

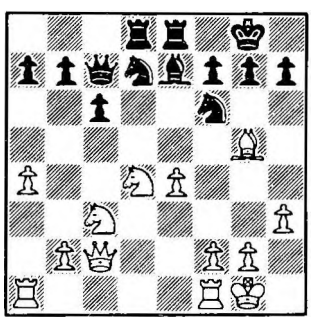
5 P-QR4 B-B4, 6 P-K3 P-K3, 7 B × P QN-Q2, 8 0-0 B-K2, 9 P-R3?! 0-0, 10 B-Q3?! B × B, 11 Q × B Q-B2, 12 P-K4

Despite appearances, White's quiet treatment of this then-popular opening has left him with no advantage and, in fact, he faces the danger of losing the initiative to Black's planned thrust in the center, ... P-K4.

12 ... P-K4, 13 B-N5 QR-Q1!

Now White's queen is misplaced because of the imminent opening of the Q-file and his failure to reinforce Q4 with 13 B-K3. The champion looks out of form during this stage of the game.

14 Q-K2?! P × P, 15 N × P KR-K1, 16 Q-B2



After 16 Q-B2

Reshevsky–Horowitz, 1941

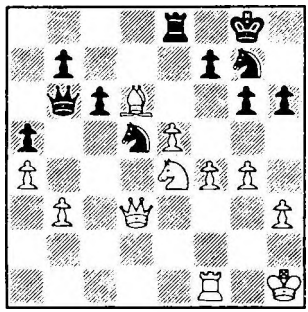
This last move was prompted by threats to White's KP (... B-N5 × N) and by Reshevsky's realization that his queen was again misplaced because it was lined up against an enemy rook along the K file. Now with 16 ... N-N5!, threatening mate as well as 17 ... B × B. Horowitz could have seized the initiative and made the match a fight. But this is exactly when he seemed to go to sleep.

16 ... B-Q3?, 17 QR-Q1 P-KR3?, 18 B-R4 B-K4?!, 19 KN-K2 N-B1, 20 R × R! Q × R, 21 P-B4! B-Q5*ch*, 22 N × B Q × N*ch*, 23 B-B2 Q-N5

In just a few moves it is White, not Black, who now holds the bishop-vs.-knight edge and better control of the center. Moreover, Reshevsky has a direct winning plan – the advance of his center pawns. His opponent was already getting into time pressure: The game was being played at the

home of bookseller Albrecht Buschke and had been delayed from its late-evening starting time when Reshevsky showed up late. The time limit was adjusted to 32 moves in two hours rather than 40 in 2½, and Horowitz simply forgot that he had only five minutes left for the next nine moves.

24 P-K5! N-Q4, 25 N-K4! N-K3, 26 P-KN3 N-Q5, 27 Q-Q3 N-B4, 28 P-N3 P-KN3, 29 B-B5 Q-R4, 30 P-KN4! N-N2, 31 B-Q6 Q-N3*ch*, 32 K-R1 P-QR4



After 32 ... P-QR4

Reshevsky–Horowitz, 1941

With seconds to spare, Horowitz avoided 32 ... N-K3 because of the complications following 33 P-B5 N(3)-B5. Actually White has a nice forced win then with 34 P × P! because 34 ... N × Q loses outright to 35 P × P*ch* and 34 ... P × P, 35 N-B6*ch* K-R1, 36 Q-K4 or 34 ... N × NP, 35 Q-KB3 only prolong the pain.

Here the game was adjourned, at 1:45 a.m., and the hosts invited the players and some 50 visitors, including Frank Marshall and Albert Hodges, to a post-midnight buffet supper. After a brief interlude Horowitz and Reshevsky, longtime friends, agreed to finish off the game that night. And so it was resumed at 3:30 a.m.(!)

33 P-B5! P × P, 34 P × P K-R1, 35 P-K6! P-B3, 36 B-B5 Q-R3, 37 Q-KB3 R-KN1, 38 R-KN1 N-K1, 39 Q-R5 R × R*ch*, 40 K × R N-N2, 41 Q × P*ch* K-N1

Here Reshevsky thought for awhile and played **42 B-B8!** which threatens mate. The bishop cannot be taken because of 42 ... K × B, 43 Q-R8*ch* K-K2, 44 Q × N*ch* and mates. Horowitz considered 42 ... N × BP, 43 Q-N6*ch* and other lines for ten minutes, then tapped the table, smiled and said, "Very pretty, Sammy. I resign." It was 5 a.m. The match referee walked out and found his car had been stolen.

Yet the match had to go on because the players had committed themselves to 16 games regardless of the scores. So on virtually no sleep they dragged themselves that afternoon to Woodside, Queens, for the 12th game—and it turned out to be even more of a marathon than the 11th. A careless blunder in a king-and-pawn endgame threw away Horowitz' only winning position in the match and he had to try to win a queen ending that finally ended after 99 moves and more than 10 hours. A draw.

Although the two men had to be off on the noon train for Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and game 13, the last four games were anticlimaxes. Reshevsky deflected all complications and the match ended 3–0, with 13 draws, in his favor. And three weeks later, he got married.

May 4–May 29, 1941

Reshevsky	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½ = 9½
Horowitz	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½ = 6½

1942: Chess at War

The most controversial championship of the generation began April 10, 1942, just five months after Pearl Harbor. Other countries had known wartime conditions and more than once had seen international tournaments cancelled because of the arrival of advancing troops. But this was entirely new to America and there was doubt at first that there would be a U.S. championship for several years.

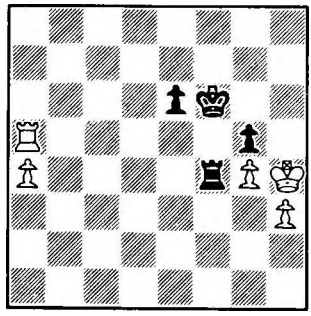
The United States Chess Federation, then just three years old, had become the official organizing body of the national tournament and in January its top officers sent out an announcement canceling the championship set for the spring of 1942. "The United States Government has issued a call for an all-out struggle in a war which has been thrust upon us," the Federation declared. "Our way of life is in great peril ... [and] the present time is not propitious for holding a championship tournament."

The USCF did hold out hope for a big "Victory Tournament" some time after the war, but this did little to mollify the players and chess fans. Horowitz editorialized against the cancellation in his magazine, pointing out that Washington had encouraged the continuation of professional sports and that other nations at war—such as Great Britain—had continued the traditions of chess despite the fighting. Depriving the public of their forms of entertainment is not a good way to build morale, Horowitz, and others, argued.

Under such pressure, the USCF relented. The nation's top players agreed to forego appearance fees and guarantees of prize money that they had come to expect, and agreed to play for modest prizes. Nevertheless, it was a weaker tournament than had been hoped. Fine was working for the government in Washington and Simonson was already in uniform. Dake and Bernstein, among others, were unavailable, and in fact, there were only seven true contenders when play began at the Hotel Astor—Reshevsky, Kashdan, Denker, Steiner, Pinkus, Horowitz and 21-year-old Herbert Seidman, the newest star of the Marshall Chess Club.

Once again the tournament turned out to be a race between two grandmasters. Reshevsky and Kashdan ran over the field, taking virtually every game, including wins over the third and fourth-place finishers, Denker and Pinkus. The leaders began furiously, scoring 8½ out of their first nine games, and held a joint two-point lead over the field with five rounds to go. But even this remarkable pair of streaks did not escape controversy:

In the sixth round Denker was also among the leaders with 4½–½ and faced Reshevsky with the Black pieces. The champion pressed an opening advantage into a heavy-piece endgame as both players began to run short of time. On the 37th move Denker managed to exchange queens but because each side had only seconds left the moves came crashing down as if they were mating sacrifices.



Reshevsky–Denker, 1942
After 44 ... P–N4*ch*

What Denker called "the maddest time scramble in which I have ever participated" had only one move to go before the time control. Reshevsky played:

45 K–N3?

... which throws away the only winning chance he had left, 45 R × P.

45 ... R–N5!

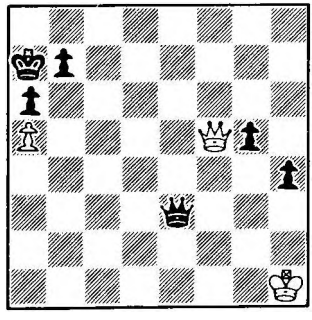
Now Black has an easy draw because his rook is in position to check along the knight file. And this was the last move of time control.

But here an extraordinary thing happened: The tournament director, L. Walter Stephens, was standing behind the board and could not see the clock directly. He picked it up, turned it around and examined the faces. Reshevsky's side showed a few seconds past 12 because its clock had been set in motion when Denker made his 45th move. Denker's side still had a few seconds left.

But in turning the clock around, Stephens—vice president of the USCF and a high school teacher—made an incredible error. Denker forfeits, he announced. Spectators stunned by this began grabbing at the clock to get a look and it was passed back and forth. Denker shouted for attention, arguments ensued and, according to Kashdan, "a near riot" was breaking out.

Finally a semblance of calm was reached and several witnesses pointed out to Stephens what he had done in turning the clock around: It was Reshevsky's side, not Denker's, that had exhausted the extra time. But Stephens would not change his mind. "Does Kenesaw Mountain Landis ever reverse himself?" he asked. And anyone familiar with the then-commissioner of baseball knew the answer. "No."

The decision stuck and Denker never recovered. As the tournament continued Reshevsky opened up a lead over Kashdan when the latter overlooked a brilliant queen sacrifice by Steiner. But the next day, against a rank outsider—Herman Halhbohm of Chicago—Reshevsky could not win against a King's Gambit. Drawing with the player who finishes dead last is almost always costly and within two days the champion added another error.



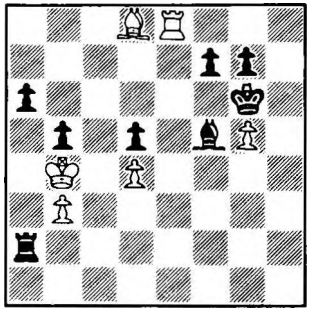
Pilnick–Reshevsky, 1942
After 92 Q–KB5

White was Carl Pilnick, the 19-year-old star of City College who was playing in his first championship. He had been playing for perpetual check for more than 50 moves but the game is just about over. His last hope was a trap.

92 ... P-N5??, 93 Q-KB2!!

A shocking, as well as embarrassing, reversal for the champion. He must acquiesce to the stalemate after 93 ... Q × Q. (Reshevsky would fall into a similar, but more intricate stalemate trap in a championship 22 years later against another City College graduate, Larry Evans).

But by the last round it was Reshevsky at 12–2 and Kashdan at 11½–2½. Kashdan had an easy opponent, the accomplished writer and collector of chess trivia, Irving Chernev. Reshevsky had to meet Horowitz, who had been a tough competitor a year before and was having one of his best championships. After Kashdan won surehandedly he sat down to watch Reshevsky. Horowitz outplayed the champ and adjourned two pawns up:



Reshevsky–Horowitz, 1942
After 45 ... B-B4

"It looks all over to the spectators," Kashdan later recalled, "but opposite colored bishops and Reshevsky's better placed king offer drawing chances. I refuse congratulations, wondering what it will be like to be champion.... It has been three long weeks. I am thinking back to 1934 when I challenged Frank J. Marshall to a match for the American championship and the number of times I have tried for the title since. This is my best. Just a few good moves, friend Horowitz...."

Friend Horowitz made good use of his extra pawn in the next dozen difficult moves:

46 R-KN8 K-R2, 47 R-B8 B-K3, 48 B-K7 R-Q7, 49 K-B5 P-N5!, 50 R-QR8 R-Q6, 51 K × P R × QP*ch*, 52 K-B5 R-Q6, 53 P-N4 R-QR6,

54 K-N6 P-Q5, 55 P-N5 R-QN6, 56 R × P P-Q6, 57 K-R5 P-Q7, 58 R-Q6

"Things go along very nicely," Kashdan was thinking. "Horowitz now has a passed pawn on Q7. It's all over. . ."

58 ... B-B5??

"No, wait. The White pawn on QN5 threatens to sneak in." (The win was 58 ... R-R6*ch*, 59 K-N4 R-R2! and 60 ... R-Q2!, getting behind the pawn, e.g. 60 R × P R × B, 61 P-N6 K-N3. Or 58 ... R-R6*ch*, 59 K-N6—blocking White's own pawn—R-R7 and B-N5.)

59 R × P R × P*ch*, 60 K-R4 R-N2, 61 B-Q8

The exchange of pawns leaves Black with only the slim possibility of a successful sacrifice of his rook for a bishop that would free his remaining pawns. The game ended with:

61 ... K-N3, 62 R-Q4 B-K3, 63 K-R5 R-N1, 64 B-K7 R-K1, 65 B-Q8 R × B, 66 R × R K × P, 67 K-N4 K-B5, 68 K-B3 P-N4, 69 K-Q2 P-N5, 70 K-K2 P-N6, 71 R-Q4*ch*! K-K4, 72 R-KR4 Draw (72 ... B-Q4, 73 R-KN4 P-N7, 74 K-B2 sets up an impregnable blockade).

It was another Reshevsky last-round miracle, and it established co-champions for the first time in American history. A playoff was inevitable.

It was called a playoff but was in effect a 14-game match for the title, much like the Horowitz challenge. The contest began in October and was to be held at U.S. Army camps for the benefit of the troops—Fort Jay on Governor's Island in New York Harbor, then Plattsburgh Barracks in upstate New York and so on. Fortunately, the pace was more relaxed than in the 1941 match and the result was superb fighting chess.

The big surprise came in Game 2. Reshevsky had not lost in 74 straight U.S. title games and he added to the streak in the first round with a difficult victory with White. The champion had to think for an hour over his tenth move in Kashdan's Gruenfeld Defense and didn't look happy. But the tide began to turn in the early middlegame and a bold Kashdan counterattack (with moves like ... P-KN4 and ... P-KB4-5) failed. Kashdan's kingside proved more vulnerable than Reshevsky's and the match stood 1-0 in favor of the champion.

But in the second game, held at a service club in Camp Upton,

Yaphank, N.Y., Reshevsky's luck ran out. While a theatrical show was going on a few steps away and a noisy dance was held in an adjacent hall, the champion ran into feverish time trouble. He had less than five minutes to make 20 moves and then barely 30 seconds for six moves. His position deteriorated rapidly and he resigned just after making the time control.

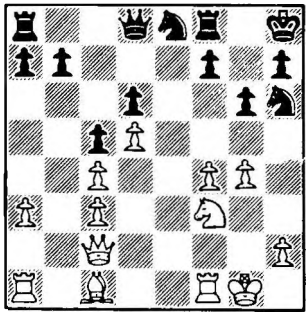
The match went back and forth, with Reshevsky retaking the lead on Lake Champlain in Game Three and Kashdan evening it in Game Four. When the match returned to New York City for the fifth game, some 200 fans crowded into the Marshall Chess Club—the largest crowd ever assembled there—to see Reshevsky take the lead he never relinquished:

Nimzo-Indian Defense
white **Reshevsky,** ***black*** **Kashdan**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-QB3 B-N5, 4 P-QR3 B × N*ch*, 5 P × B P-B4, 6 P-K3 0-0, 7 B-Q3 N-B3, 8 N-B3 P-Q3, 9 Q-B2 P-K4, 10 P-Q5 N-K2, 11 0-0 K-R1?!

After giving away one of his cherished bishops Kashdan begins to play passively. He wants to advance ... P-B4 but that would be met by a vigorous opening of the center with P-K4. So, he adopts another strategy, exchanging off one of the enemy bishops in the hope that White will be left with a bad, pawn-bound QB.

12 N-K1! N-K1, 13 P-B4! P × P, 14 P × P P-KN3, 15 N-B3 B-B4, 16 B × B N × B, 17 P-N4 N-R3



After 17 ... N-R3

Reshevsky-Kashdan, 1942

This is the positional crisis of the game. White cannot play 18 P-N5? N-B4 without obtaining a bad game. He has only one consistent move

and that is the sacrifice of a pawn with 18 P–B5! On 18 Q–KN2, for example, Black shuts the position up with 18 ... P–B4!

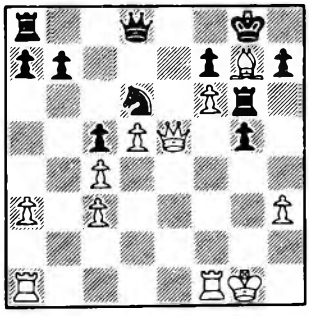
18 P–B5! N × NP

Black must accept the sacrifice because 18 ... N–N1 would permit White to activate his bishop without danger at KN5 or KB4.

19 P–R3! N–K4, 20 N × N P × N, 21 B–R6 R–KN1, 22 P–B6!

Nicely played. Black cannot accept the second pawn because of 23 B–N5. Kashdan must play very accurately now to meet the coming swarm of White pieces.

22 ... P–KN4, 23 Q–B5! R–N3, 24 B–B8 N–Q3?!, 25 B–N7*ch* K–N1, 26 Q × KP



After 26 Q × KP

Reshevsky–Kashdan, 1942

26 ... Q–Q2?

Black could have taken the KBP on move 24 but, more important, he could safely have grabbed the other BP now. Fine claims a defensible position for Black after 24 ... N × P, 25 Q × KP Q × B, 26 R × N R × R, 27 Q × R*ch* Q–N2 or, in the last diagram, 26 ... N × P, 27 Q–K2 N–Q3, 28 QR–K1 N–K1. Kashdan's passive policy leads him into a totally helpless bind in which White can mate even without queens.

27 QR–K1 P–KR4?

Once again a knight move was necessary, 27 ... N–K1!

28 Q–K7!

Fourth U.S. Championship, New York, April 10–30, 1942

	K	R	D	P	S	H	S	L	L	C	P	B	L	A	G	H	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–2. Kashdan	X	½	1	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	11	3	1	12½–2½
1–2. Reshevsky	½	X	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	10	5	0	12½–2½
3–4. Denker	0	0	X	1	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	9	3	3	10½–4½
3–4. Pinkus	0	0	0	X	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	10	1	4	10½–4½
5. Steiner	1	0	½	½	X	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	½	1	½	8	4	3	10–5
6. Horowitz	0	½	½	0	0	X	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	6	6	3	9–6
7. Seidman	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	1	0	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	6	2	7	7–8
8–9. Levin, J.	½	0	1	0	1	0	0	X	0	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	3	7	5	6½–8½
8–9. Levy, L.	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	1	X	½	0	½	0	1	1	1	5	3	7	6½–8½
10–11. Chernev	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	X	½	1	0	1	1	1	4	4	7	6–9
10–11. Pilnick, C.	0	½	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	½	X	0	1	1	0	½	4	4	7	6–9
12–13. Baker, H.	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	½	½	0	1	X	½	½	½	½	2	7	6	5½–9½
12–13. Lessing, N.	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	1	0	½	X	0	1	½	3	5	7	5½–9½
14–16. Altman, B.	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	1	X	1	0	2	4	9	4–11
14–16. Green	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	0	X	1	2	4	9	4–11
14–16. Hahlbohm, H.	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	0	X	1	6	8	4–11

(Green withdrew and forfeited seven games.)

Black cannot avoid the endgame that follows, an endgame in which White's rooks run all over the kingside. Black must agree to open lines there with ... P–N5 because otherwise his rook is stalemated on KN3.

The rest of the game was relatively easy:

28 ... Q × Q, 29 R × Q R–Q1, 30 KR–K1 K–R2, 31 K–N2 (31 K–B2!) P–N5, 32 R(1)–K5! P × P*ch*, 33 K × P R–N8, 34 R × P*ch* K–N3, 35 R(7)–K5 R–R8*ch*, 36 K–N4 N–K5?, 37 R × R N–B7*ch*, 38 K–B4! Black resigns.

(In view of 38 ... N × R, 39 R–N5*ch* K–R2, 40 R–R5*ch* K–N3, 41 R–R6 *mate*.) And the rest of the match was also easy. Reshevsky continued to win with White but held the draw as Black. He finished out with three more wins and three draws before Kashdan conceded. The match ended at 7½-3½.

Chapter Seven

The Post-War Years (1944–1954)

By the time the fifth championship arrived, the face of American chess had been altered considerably. Several of the top players were either in uniform or committed to jobs that left little time for chess. Moreover, the class of players that was so young in 1936 was now advancing into middle age and many were no longer so eager to give the time and energy necessary to compete.

The result was five championship tournaments that could safely be said to be among the weakest held since the 1870s. Only one or two players of true grandmaster strength competed for the top prize each year and, at the other end of the scoretable, there were often a half dozen players who would never have survived the preliminary eliminations of the 1930s. Reshevsky was studying for his examinations to become a certified public accountant and passed up the 1944 tournament. He played (and won, of course) two years later but again failed to play in 1948. Fine played once more, in 1944, but retired when he failed to win. Kashdan tried in 1946 and again in 1948 and then he too gave up on the title chase.

Some of the other contenders had also fallen by the wayside. Dake had given up competitive play in 1938 and was tempted back to the board only by an occasional event, such as the 1945 U.S.-U.S.S.R. radio match. Alexander Kevitz, who had been touted as a coming star in the mid-1930s, became so disappointed by a mere even score in the 1936 championship that he gave up chess for his pharmacy business and didn't return to the board for nearly ten years. Even Denker, who won the 1944 championship, resumed amateur status and played infrequently after 1946.

It was, in short, a depleted era—too old for the '30s generation and too soon for the arrival of the '50s generation. Many members of the latter group—Larry Evans, Arthur Bisguier, George Kramer, and Robert

and Donald Byrne—were just reaching the top master ranks by the end of the period. So, during the 10 years from 1944 to 1954 the U.S. title went to five different players during five different tournaments.

1944: Reshevsky-less

Nine players were seeded for the second and last wartime tournament, but they were a much less imposing lot than had met just two years before. The favorite by far was Fine, with Steiner, Horowitz, Denker and Pinkus given only a distant chance of upsetting him. Kashdan would have been a more serious rival to Fine but at the last moment, after making plans to play, he had to withdraw on doctor's orders.

There were also nine qualifiers but most were barely of master strength. Only 18 men entered the preliminaries—about a third of the 1936 total—with the result that anyone who scored moderately well ended up in the national championship. One was Louis Persinger, a violin teacher who included Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern and Ruggiero Ricci among his students and was a member of the Juilliard School of Music faculty. Persinger, who was perhaps a 2000 player by modern rating standards, eventually scored only one draw in 17 games of the finals—the worst championship record up to that time. "The boards were out of tune," he explained.

As expected, the five top masters—Fine, Steiner, Pinkus, Horowitz and Denker—began with a string of victories and were soon far ahead of the field. Only George Shainswit stayed within reasonable distance—although he finished a full three points from the leaders. The initial pace was set by Denker and Horowitz with 3-0 scores while Fine got into trouble in the very first round and had to work hard to save a lost position against Pinkus. Denker then moved into sole possession of first place when he knocked off Horowitz.

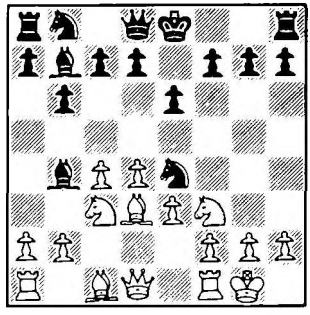
The leader was a young, good-looking 200-pound New Yorker who had once divided his interest between chess and boxing. Years earlier Arnold Denker had reached the quarter finals of the Bronx County Golden Gloves, a traditional local event for amateur boxers, and had even managed a welterweight fighter for a while. In his other game, chess, Denker had slowly improved in U.S. title play. He moved up from an unheralded 12th in 1936 to equal sixth in 1940 and then a highly creditable tie for third behind Kashdan and Reshevsky in 1942.

And now after six rounds in 1944 he held at least a half point lead over Fine and the rest of the field. The exact size of his lead depended on the outcome of a drawish adjourned game of Fine's. This made the

seventh-round meeting with the tournament favorite "my greatest bid for the title," Denker recalled. But he could afford to draw; Fine could not.

Nimzo-Indian Defense
***white* Denker, *black* Fine**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-QB3 B-N5, 4 P-K3 P-QN3, 5 B-Q3 B-N2, 6 N-B3 N-K5, 7 0-0!?



After 7 0-0

Denker-Fine, 1944

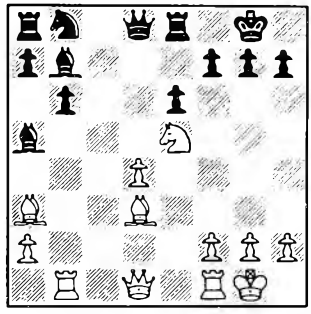
Prepared analysis? Denker was quite an expert in the queenside openings at the time. But, no, there was no reason to suspect this position would arise. Fine had never before played the Nimzo-Indian against Denker, and the latter was all set to play a Queen's Gambit Declined.

The text is a spur-of-the-moment sacrifice of a pawn, reminiscent of a swashbuckling opening of another era (1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 B-B4 B-B4, 4 P-B3 N-B3, 5 P-Q4 P × P, 6 P × P B-N5*ch*, 7 N-B3 N × KP, 8 0-0!?). It works superbly on Fine. The idea of the sacrifice was interred by analysts shortly after this game, only to be revived 20 years later. The gambit is now regarded as unsound and Bobby Fischer, for example, says simply that 7 ... N × N, 8 P × N B × P, 9 R-N1 N-B3! leaves White with little compensation for his missing pawn.

7 ... N × N, 8 P × N B × P, 9 R-N1 B-R4?, 10 B-R3

How will Black castle now? If he maneuvers a knight to K2 (10 ... N-B3, 11 P-Q5 N-K2) White can play 12 N-N5 followed by Q-R5 with a tremendous attack. Fine seeks a closed pawn shell as a refuge but Denker shows that it can be opened quickly.

10 ... P–Q3, 11 P–B5! 0–0, 12 P × QP P × P, 13 P–K4! R–K1, 14 P–K5 P × P, 15 N × P



After 15 N × P

Denker–Fine, 1944

At this point Denker got up from his board, strolled over to Kenneth Harkness, the latest coeditor of *Chess Review*, and summed up his position: "Right now Fine is busted higher than a kite. But that doesn't mean to say I'll win it. You know me!"

The immediate threat is 16 B × P*ch* K × B, 17 Q–R5*ch* K–N1, 18 Q × P*ch* followed by R–N3–R3*ch*, a familiar theme that Fine must have seen instantly. Yet even with an advance warning there is no easy defense. If Black covers the KR2 square with 15 ... P–KR3 White can play 16 Q–R5 Q–B3, 17 N × P! because 17 ... Q × N is met by 18 B–N6.

15 ... Q–N4

The queen does a poor job of blocking the kingside and Fine's postmortem suggestion of 15 ... P–N3!? appears to be Black's last bid for a defense. Both sides had their say in the postmortem, as well as in published analysis afterwards. Denker said White is still winning after 15 ... P–N3, 16 B–N5! Q–Q4, 17 P–B3. For example, he said, 17 ... N–B3 can be met by 18 N–N4! Q–Q1, 19 P–Q5 P × P, 20 B × N and 21 Q–Q4. And 17 ... B–B3 would be handled elegantly by 18 N–N4 Q–Q1, 19 P–Q5 B × B, 20 R × B P–QR3, 21 P × P!!

But Fine disagreed. He pointed out this line: 16 B–N5 Q–Q4, 17 P–B3 B–B3, 18 N–N4 and now not Denker's 18 ... Q–Q1? ("Almost the worst move on the board") but 18 ... K–N2! which forces White to fight, e.g. 19 Q–B1 B × B, 20 Q–R6*ch* K–R1, 21 R × B! Q × P*ch*!, 22 K–R1 N–Q2.

16 P–N3 P–N3

Here 16 ... N–B3 would be met by 17 N × P! K × N, 18 R–N5! with lines such as 18 ... P–K4, 19 Q–N3*ch* K–B3, 20 P–B4! and 18 ... Q–B3, 19 Q–R5*ch* P–N3, 20 Q × RP*ch* Q–N2, 21 B × P*ch* K–B3, 22 Q–R4*ch*. To find these variations in any game is a real treat for an attacking master, and to find them against Reuben Fine, then counted among the five best players in the world, was exhilarating.

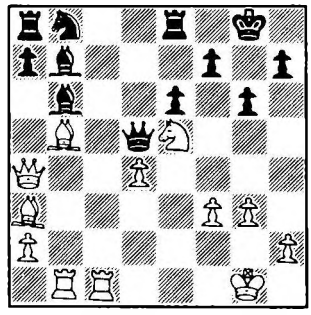
17 Q–R4! Q–Q1

"It was obvious from the way in which Fine was squirming and twisting in his chair that he did not like his position," wrote eyewitness Harkness. "As time went by his face became redder and redder as he tried to find some way of extricating himself."

18 KR–B1 P–QN4

This is Black's last bid for counterplay. The move clears QN3 for Black's bishop so that it will no longer be vulnerable on QR4 and will gain time by attacking the QP. Denker's sudden shift to the queenside had eroded Fine's supply of time as well as his position and Black had only 23 minutes for 22 moves now.

19 B × QNP Q–Q4, 20 P–B3 B–N3



After 20 ... B–N3

Denker–Fine, 1944

21 R–B5!! B × R, 22 B × B

Fine could have resigned here but he didn't have enough time to think about it. Besides 23 B × R, White's threats include 23 B–B4 and 24 R × B.

22 ... R–KB1, 23 B–B4 B–B3, 24 B × Q B × Q, 25 B × QR

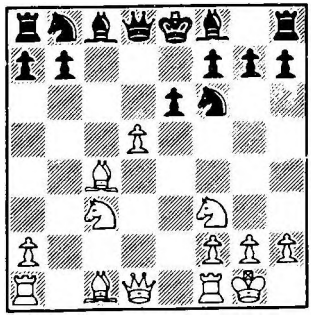
With his forfeiture flag on the tilt and 16 moves to go, Fine resigned, all but conceding his last try at the championship. An unhappy outcome for the strongest player who never won the title.

There were still ten rounds to go and several moderately strong players for Denker to face. Nevertheless, when a player seems to be having the tournament of his life, good luck eases away all danger. On the day after beating Fine, the tournament leader obtained a very bad position against Weaver Adams, who chose a subtle fianchetto system against Denker's Sicilian Defense. Denker held firm—and offered a draw. Not once, but several times, according to *Chess Review*. The pressures of searching for the winning move eventually got to Adams. He blundered, throwing away not only the win he sought but also the draw.

Finally after nine straight wins, Denker conceded a draw to Shainswit. His lead remained solid, however, and no one came within a point of his score until the very end. His only close call came in the 12th round when he faced Aaron Rothman, a Bronx amateur. Rothman was another of the lucky qualifiers and had been massacred earlier by Fine in 15 moves. It reminded the loser of the recent gangland assassination of a mob chieftain in the same hotel. "I suppose Fine thinks he is keeping up the tradition," Rothman said. But he had a big chance to redeem himself by beating Denker:

Sicilian Defense
white Rothman, *black* Denker

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-QN4!? P × P, 4 P-Q4 P-Q4?, 5 P × P Q × P, 6 P-B4! P × P*e.p.*, 7 N × P Q-Q1, 8 B-QB4 N-KB3, 9 0-0 P-K3, 10 P-Q5!



After 10 P-Q5

Rothman–Denker, 1944

Fifth U.S. Championship, New York, April 15–May 7, 1944

	D	F	H	S	P	S	A	A	A	D	W	I	N	R	S	C	G	P	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Denker	X	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	3	0	15½–1½
2. Fine	0	X	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	13	3	1	14½–2½
3–4. Horowitz	0	½	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13	2	2	14–3
3–4. Steiner	½	0	1	X	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12	4	1	14–3
5. Pinkus	0	½	½	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	5	1	13½–3½
6. Shainswit	½	0	0	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	7	7	3	10½–6½
7. Altman	½	0	0	0	0	0	X	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	2	7	9–8
8–9. Adams	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	X	1	0	1	1	½	0	1	½	1	1	6	4	7	8–9
8–9. Almgren, S.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	X	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	0	9	8–9
10–11. DiCamillo	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	1	X	½	½	½	0	0	1	1	1	5	4	8	7–10
10–11. Weinstock	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	1	½	X	0	0	½	1	0	1	1	5	4	8	7–10
12–14. Isaacs	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	X	1	½	0	1	1	1	5	3	9	6½–10½
12–14. Neidich	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	0	X	0	1	1	½	½	4	5	8	6½–10½
12–14. Rothman, A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	½	½	1	X	1	½	0	1	5	3	9	6½–10½
15. Stromberg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	X	1	1	1	5	0	12	5–12
16. Chernev	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	1	0	0	½	0	X	1	1	3	3	11	4½–12½
17. Gladstone	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	0	0	X	1	2	1	14	2½–14½
18. Persinger	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	X	0	1	16	½–16½

Denker had confused this opening, a delayed form of the Wing Gambit, with the normal Wing, which begins 1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 P-QN4 P × P, 3 P-QR3 P-Q4!, 4 KP × P Q × P (threatening 5 ... Q-K4*ch*), 5 N-KB3 P-K4 and leads to a strong game for Black. (See Shirazi-Peters, page 277, for a shocking example.) Here, however, Black is pinned back to the first two ranks and in danger of not reaching a middle game.

10 ... P × P, 11 R-K1*ch*?

With such a powerful position Rothman has too many good moves. The most exact procedure is 11 N × P so that on 11 ... N × N, 12 B × N B-K2 he pours it on with 13 Q-N3 0-0, 14 N-K5 Q-K1, 15 R-K1.

11 ... B-K2, 12 B-R3?!

And here 12 N × P was necessary to maintain the attack, which is still alive after 12 ... N × N, 13 B × N 0-0, 14 Q-N3 N-B3 but not nearly as dangerous. Rothman now goes quickly downhill:

12 ... N-B3, 13 Q-K2? P × B!, 14 QR-Q1 B-Q2, 15 B × B Q × B!, 16 Q × P B-K3, 17 R × B P × R, 18 R-K1 0-0, 19 R × P N-QR4!, 20 Q-K2 Q-B4, 21 R-K7 QR-K1 and White resigns.

Denker had finished all the tough games by Round 15 while Fine had yet to meet Horowitz. When they did, the magazine publisher nearly won, but even the draw he made was a fatal blow to Fine's chances: Denker had amassed an amazing score of 14 ½ - ½, and was a point and a half ahead of his nearest rival. Such a margin permitted him to accept painless draws in his last two games. And so Arnold Sheldon Denker thus became the first man whose name was not spelled "Reshevsky" to take sole first prize in a modern United States championship.

1946: Back to Normalcy (and Controversy)

The war was over by the year of the sixth championship, and Americans were learning to adjust to a strange new world. Joe Louis was still the heavyweight boxing champion and Alexander Alekhine, a kind of heavyweight in his own field, was also firmly on top. But neither would remain so for long. Lettuce was selling for 10 cents a head but inflation would soon erase all memory of low prices. National unity, which had held so solidly during the four war years, would be tested when

President Truman seized the railroads during a nationwide strike, and the wartime alliances would be strained by disputes about what to do with Trieste, Berlin, Korea and other trouble spots. When they didn't want to worry about these matters Americans went to see Alan Ladd in *O.S.S.* and listened on their Philcos to the Red Sox play the Cardinals in the World Series.

In chess it was a tumultuous year with both a championship match and a tournament, as well as a divisive battle over how contenders should be chosen. Many of the plans and ambitions that were voiced this year had been buried for the duration of the war but no longer needed to be postponed. At the center of the controversy was the United States Chess Federation, which was only a matter of weeks old when the fighting in Europe had begun in 1939. The USCF had been formed out of the National Chess Federation, essentially a letterhead organization, which represented the United States in Europe and organized the championship tournaments but had little grass roots strength, and the Western Chess Association (or rather its successor, the old American Chess Federation), which was the chief organizational network outside of New York. In agreeing to consolidate, the two former bodies said the new USCF would speak for chess here and abroad and organize an annual U.S. Open. No mention was made of the championship, but it was assumed that the new body would take full control of it.

By 1946 the USCF's principal members noticed a trend. The championship was no longer attracting the strongest players. There were a number of factors, such as the demands of the war effort and the financial attraction of nonchess activity. But the USCF, which was after all a *national* and political organization, cited another factor: The U.S. championship had been dominated for too long by New Yorkers and the New York–orientation of the event (such as having the preliminaries held there) tended to undermine chess west of the Hudson.

To correct this, the USCF announced there would be no seeded players for the sixth championship. All interested players, even the grandmasters, would have to compete in regional elimination events, held around the country. It was democratic and yet almost revolutionary because respect for the top masters was so ingrained. But the new plan couldn't work.

The idea of regional qualification ignored the fact that talent, at least in 1946, was distributed unevenly. You might seed a few players from solid chess areas such as Chicago or Philadelphia. But to insist on rigid sectional divisions for selecting all the finalists would create more problems. For example, the USCF had alloted two qualifying spots for players from the West Coast. But since Steiner and Dake were the

leading players there and Fine had temporarily moved to the Pacific Coast, one of the three would have to be denied. Similarly, there would be a disparity in New York, which was alloted only three spots. If Kashdan, Horowitz and Pinkus were to compete how could any of the improving players, such as Kevitz, Seidman, Santasiere or 16-year-old George Kramer, hope to qualify? Yet all of them had more than shown their worthiness by year's end.

Shortly after the USCF unveiled its regional play, Edward Lasker rallied the opposition: He announced the formation of a group called the Association of American Chess Masters, with himself as president, and Fine, Reshevsky and Pinkus as vice presidents. They, not the national federation, would organize the championship, the masters said.

This threat to the USCF's franchise forced it to retreat and within weeks a compromise had been reached. The Chicago-based federation would continue to run the championship and there would be regional events to choose some of the finalists. But there would also be seven seeded players. And, for a while, peace reigned.

Denker vs. Steiner

But there was also a match to be held because for the second time in five years a strong contender had mounted the financial support to issue a challenge to the championship tournament winner. The challenge came from 41-year-old Herman Steiner, then nearing the height of his game, with good reason to believe he could unseat Denker. The New Yorker *had* been somewhat lucky in 1944, most observers agreed, and his true strength was closer to that of 1945, they said. In that year a team of ten Soviet masters had played the ten best Americans by radio in the first international chess event anywhere since the end of World War II. The Americans, victors in four previous world team championships, were clobbered (4½–15½) and on first board Denker was completely outclassed in his two games with Mikhail Botvinnik.

Yet in the debacle there was a bright spot: Steiner, who scored a win and a draw with Igor Bondarevsky. His games were played on sixth board but they still accounted for one third of the Americans' total of points. Then in January 1946—admitting he was out to "redeem the reputation" of the United States—Steiner scored a somewhat startling first place finish at a moderately strong "Victory" tournament held in London. The tournament was divided into two groups: Steiner won the larger of the two, while Denker finished well down the scoretable in the other. Steiner added to his laurels with a good finish at Hastings just before the London

event and he would win the U.S. Open later that summer ahead of a talented group of youngsters that included Kramer, 18-year-old Robert Byrne, 16-year-old Donald Byrne, 16-year-old Arthur Bisguier and 14-year-old Larry Evans.

Thus there was some doubt about the outcome of the ten-game match when it began in March in Steiner's adopted city, Los Angeles. It was the first time since the 1941–1942 matches that the title was at stake outside New York. Towards the end of the two-week struggle the stars of the two coasts shared the honors equally. But not at the beginning:

May 4–May 18, 1946

Denker	1	1	1	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	½ = 6
Steiner	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	½ = 4

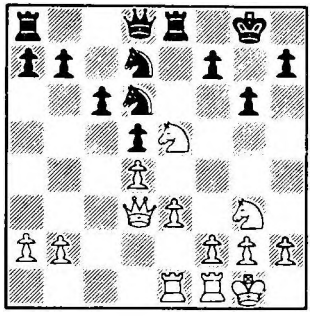
Denker had flown west with a traditional match strategy of drawing his games with Black and winning with White. "But somehow or other these cold-blooded rationalizations never seem to work out," he said after the first game. "After only a few moves I found myself playing just another game of chess, disregarding the importance of the occasion!"

Queen's Gambit Declined
***white* Steiner, *black* Denker**

1 P-Q4 P-Q4, 2 N-KB3 N-KB3, 3 P-B4 P-B3, 4 N-B3 P-K3, 5 B-N5 QN-Q2, 6 P × P KP × P, 7 P-K3 B-K2, 8 B-Q3 N-K5!, 9 B-KB4 QN-B3, 10 Q-B2 0-0!

Black has taken advantage of a slight inaccuracy (8 B–Q3 instead of 8 Q–B2) to plant his knights. White can dislodge them and win a pawn here—11 B × N N × B, 12 N × N P × N, 13 Q × KP—but only at the cost of risking a powerful attack—13 ... Q–R4*ch*, 14 N–Q2 B–QN5, 15 Q–B2 P–QB4 (16 P × P P–QN3! followed by ... B–R3 or ... B–N2).

11 0-0 B-Q3, 12 B × B N × B, 13 N-K5 P-KN3!, 14 QR-K1 B-B4, 15 N-K2 B × B, 16 Q × B N-Q2, 17 N-N3 R-K1



After 17 ... R-K1

Steiner-Denker, 1946

Denker's model play has left him with an excellent middle game. By trading off both sets of bishops he eliminates all serious threats to his king position. Steiner, misunderstanding the position, has ignored the opportunity to shift his play to the queenside with 14 P-QN4! and P-QR4/P-N5. He wants to mate.

18 P-B4? P-KB4

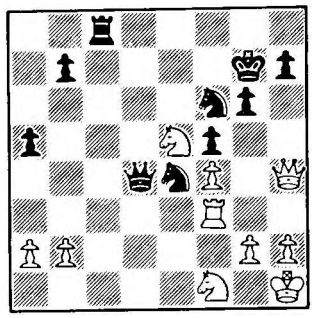
To stop P-KB5 Black had conceded White the K5 square for as long as he wants it. (If Black ever captures on his K4 White retakes with the BP, plays N-K2-B4 and opens up the position favorably with P-KN4!). But Steiner has underestimated Black's counterplay elsewhere.

19 Q-N3 K-N2, 20 R-K2 N-B3, 21 R-B3?! Q-N3!, 22 Q-B3 KR-QB1!

Here comes ... P-QB4, a move that is much stronger now that White has opened the line leading from KB2 to QN6. Steiner's pieces, chiefly his knight on KN3 and his KR, are out of contact with the squares he now needs to protect.

23 R-QB2 P-QR4, 24 N-B1 N(Q3)-K5, 25 Q-K1 P-B4, 26 P × P R × P, 27 R × R Q × R, 28 Q-R4 P-Q5!, 29 P × P Q × P*ch*, 30 K-R1 R-QB1

Black's rook penetrates decisively on the seventh rank (as in the game) or on the eighth (as in 31 P-KR3 R-B8, 32 K-R2 N-Q7, 33 N × N Q-N8*ch*, 34 K-N3 N-R4*ch*). The game was over in minutes.



After 30 ... R-QB1

Steiner-Denker, 1946

31 N-Q3 R-B7, 32 Q-K1 N-N5, 33 P-KR3 N(N5)-B7*ch*, 34 N × N R × N, 35 R-QN3 P-N3, 36 Q-B1 P-R5, 37 R-R3 P-QN4!, 38 K-R2 Q × P, 39 Q-B7*ch* K-R3, 40 Q-K7 R × P*ch*, 41 K-R1 Q-KB7! and White resigns.

In the next game a disillusioned Steiner blundered away a piece on the 13th move. He recovered his form by the sixth game, but it was already too late.

Sixth Championship Tournament: Sammy, with Ease

In November 1946—after another match drubbing at the hands of the Russians—the top American players again assembled in New York to pick a champion. The Association of American Chess Masters was forgotten and so was the suspicion that there were superstars in the hinterlands waiting to be discovered. True, only eight of the 19 championship finalists were New Yorkers but they accounted for seven of the top nine places in the final scoretable and 60 percent of all wins.

For once the tournament was not held in a hotel ballroom, where players were often smothered by spectators, but in a comfortable theater in a large office building. The games were displayed on huge wallboards and the theater could accommodate up to 300 chess fans in plush seats. It all was done in "a more lavish and showmanlike fashion than ever before," Reshevsky said.

The tournament itself featured another Reshevsky-Kashdan race, the first since their playoff match, as well as the addition of several new faces. Jacob Levin of Philadelphia was playing in only his second U.S. championship but he managed to find his way to fourth place—ahead of defending champion Denker, recent challenger Steiner and perennial contender Horowitz. Also, in ninth place was the New York State

champion, 16-year-old George Kramer, who seemed certain to become a contender within five or six years.

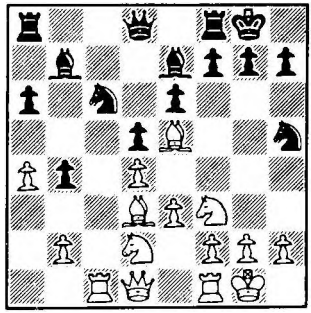
But in the end it was Reshevsky's easiest championship. He defeated Kashdan, Denker, Steiner and Pinkus and permitted only a few draws. More than at any time in his career, Reshevsky was clearly the best American. The sixth championship had no single game of critical significance, and the following is the only one that might have made it a closer fight.

Queen's Gambit Declined
white Reshevsky, *black* Kashdan

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-B3, 3 N-KB3 P-Q4, 4 P × P P × P, 5 N-B3 P-K3, 6 B-B4 P-QR3, 7 P-K3 B-K2, 8 B-Q3 P-QN4, 9 R-QB1 B-N2, 10 P-QR4

Black has adopted an ambitious placement of his queenside pieces and pawns. But here he cannot sustain the front and must play either ... P-N5, conceding good squares to a White knight (N-N1-Q2-N3-B5!) or ... P × P with the same weakness, plus an isolated RP.

10 ... P-N5, 11 N-QN1! N-B3, 12 QN-Q2 0-0, 13 0-0 N-KR4, 14 B-K5!



After 14 B-K5

Reshevsky-Kashdan, 1946

Reshevsky's last move is common in this kind of position. If Black captures the bishop, White can leave the remaining knight in the lurch with 15 P × N (e.g. 15 ... Q-Q2, 16 P-N4; 15 ... P-N3, 16 N-Q4) or centralize his own with 15 N × N. Most likely, Kashdan's best move here would have been 14 ... P-B4 so that he can bring his knight back to earth (... N-B3-K5!).

Sixth U.S. Championship, New York, Oct. 26–Nov. 17, 1946

	R	K	S	L	D	H	S	P	K	S	U	R	A	D	R	S	D	F	K	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Reshevsky	X	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	4	0	16–2
2. Kashdan	0	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	5	2	13½–4½
3. Santasiere	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	9	8	1	13–5
4. Levin	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	9	7	2	12½–5½
5–6. Denker	0	½	½	½	X	0	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	9	6	3	12–6
5–6. Horowitz	½	1	1	½	1	X	0	1	0	½	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	10	4	4	12–6
7. Steiner	0	0	0	0	½	1	X	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	½	1	10	2	6	11–7
8. Pinkus	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	X	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	7	7	4	10½–7½
9. Kramer, G.	½	0	½	0	1	1	0	½	X	1	½	½	0	0	1	½	1	½	1	6	7	5	9½–8½
10. Sandrin, A. Jr.	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	X	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	7	2	9	8–10
11. Ulvestad, O.	0	½	½	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	X	0	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	4	7	7	7½–10½
12. Rubinow, S.	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	X	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	6	2	10	7–11
13–16. Adams	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	X	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	3	10	6½–11½
13–16. DiCamillo	0	0	½	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	X	½	0	0	½	0	5	3	10	6½–11½
13–16. Rothman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	0	1	½	X	0	1	1	1	5	3	10	6½–11½
13–16. Suesman	0	0	0	0	½	1	0	½	½	1	0	0	0	1	1	X	0	½	½	4	5	9	6½–11½
17. Drexel, G.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	1	X	1	0	4	2	12	5–13
18. Fink, A.	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	X	1	1	6	11	4–14
19. Kowalski, S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	½	1	0	X	3	1	14	3½–14½

14 ... P-**B3**?!, **15 N-N5!**

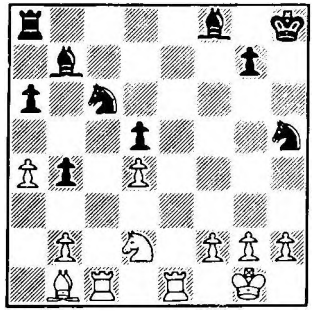
All of a sudden things become very complex. White uses the vulnerability of the Black knight: After 15 ... P × B he would have his choice between a tricky attack that might work and might only draw (16 Q × N B × N, 17 Q × P*ch*) and a complex middlegame with approximate material equality (16 B × P*ch* K-R1, 17 N × P Q-K1, 18 N × R B × N, 19 B-N1! with ideas of Q-B2-R7 *mate*).

15 ... Q-K1?, 16 B × P*ch* K-R1, 17 B-N1!

This was the move that Reshevsky had foreseen and Kashdan had probably missed. On 17 ... P × N White can win material with 18 Q-B2, threatening mate. This finesse gives Reshevsky time to win back the exchange and some pawns for a favorable endgame.

17 ... P × B, 18 N × P P × P, 19 N × R B × N, 20 P × P N-B3, 21 R-K1 Q-R4, 22 Q × Q*ch*! N × Q

The combination is over and White has two pawns and a rook for his two captured pieces—often a disadvantageous balance. But his remaining material becomes very active and it is Black who must fight for a draw. The remainder of the game showed that Kashdan's strength in the endgame, once unchallenged in the United States, was no longer supreme.



After 22 ... N × Q

Reshevsky-Kashdan, 1946

23 N-B3 N-B3, 24 R-K6 R-B1, 25 B-B5! N-K2?! (25 ... N × P!, 26 R × R N × N*ch*, 27 P × N B × R offers drawing chances due to the bishops of opposite color) **26 R × R N × R, 27 N-K5 K-N1, 28 N-N6 N-Q3, 29 B-R3 N-B5, 30 P-QN3 N-QR4, 31 R-N6 K-B2, 32 N × B K × N, 33 R × NP B-B3, 34 R-N6 B-K1, 35 R × P N × P, 36 P-R5 K-K2, 37 R-K6*ch* K-Q1, 38 P-R6 K-B2, 39 P-R7 K-N2, 40 R-N6*ch*! Black resigns.**

1948: The Largest and the Least

It was the best of championships, it was the worst of championships. It had one of the best prize funds, but came while the USCF was on the verge of bankruptcy. It was played under excellent conditions in a resort town, but isolated from virtually any spectators who wanted to see the games played. It was the largest field, 20 players—but also one of the very weakest.

Originally the field in 1948 was intended to be larger—22 players—to accommodate all the seeded masters as well as those qualifying from the by-now-familiar regional events. But the size was scaled down by the time invitations were sent out. The foremost questions concerned the acceptances that didn't come back: Where was Fine? Where was Reshevsky?

No one doubted Fine's sincerity in explaining that his work towards a degree in psychology prevented him from accepting an invitation. Just a few months earlier he had had to turn down the much more prestigious world championship tournament that had been held in Europe. But Reshevsky *was* available—sort of.

Sammy was willing to play if he received a guaranteed fee for playing, as had been offered in some of the previous tournaments. But the 1948 organizers had put all the money they could round up into the prizes. They skimped by moving the event away from expensive Manhattan and had made other budget cuts. They simply didn't understand why one player should be getting extra money for just showing up. If Reshevsky was as strong as he claimed, he would be assured of the more than generous first prize. Negotiations between the two sides broke down and Reshevsky announced he would not play. Furthermore, he wanted his name taken off all advance publicity heralding the upcoming tournament.

It was in that strained atmosphere that the USCF invited Olaf Ulvestad of Seattle as a last-minute replacement for Sammy and scheduled the first round for August 10th in the small upstate New York town of South Fallsburg. But on August 9th Reshevsky announced he was willing to play after all, without a guarantee.

This created an organizational nightmare. The tournament officials could not just tell Ulvestad to go home. But to add Reshevsky at that late date they would not only have to find an extra hotel room in an overbooked city, but also negotiate for an extra day or two with the 20-odd hotels that had set space aside for players and organizers. They would also have to convince the players to revise their own schedules to accommodate Reshevsky, and sacrifice two more days away from home. In the

end, the organizers simply said "No." It was not the last time a star player would be left out of the championship because of a money or scheduling dispute.

The exit of Reshevsky left Isaac Kashdan in the same head-of-the-pack position as Fine four years before. He was the only grandmaster in a relatively weak field. Besides the absence of Reshevsky, there was no Denker, no Dake, no Horowitz. Kash seemed prepared to take the Marshall trophy home to Brooklyn by default.

He started out well with a strong 8–1 score while Steiner rumbled along at 7–2. Steiner, who had had some difficulty qualifying from the regional event held in his adopted home, Los Angeles, had justified Ulvestad's inclusion in the tournament by losing to him in the fifth round. Steiner was regarded as steady but simply not talented enough to hit the top of American chess. Earlier in this year he had played a match with Fine and lost badly, 5–1.

But the event suddenly tightened up when Kashdan sat down in the 10th round with Sol Rubinow. Rubinow, who would later become better known as a bridge champion and even better than that in his chosen field of biomathematics, was then a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania and a dangerous, aggressive chess player. His choice of opening was inspired:

Four Knights Game
***white* Rubinow, *black* Kashdan**

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 N–B3 N–B3, 4 P–Q4 P × P, 5 N–Q5!?

This, the Belgrade Gambit, was very new at the time. Like most gambits, its teeth were drawn by the analysts and it lost its popularity once tournament players found out how easy it was to play Black after 5 ... B–K2, 6 N × P KN × N, 7 P × N N × N, 8 Q × N 0–0. But one can imagine Kashdan's problems in assessing such other lines, as 5 ... N × P, 6 Q–K2 P–KB4, 7 P–KN4!? or 7 N–N5 P–Q6!, 8 P × P N–Q5, 9 Q–R5*ch* P–N3, 10 Q–R4.

5 ... N × N?!

Black gets a very temporary initiative because of this.

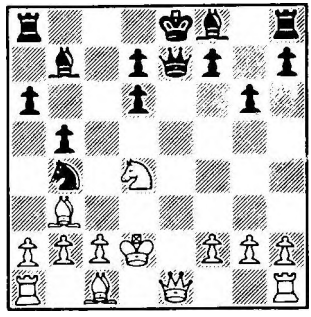
6 P × N N–N5, 7 B–QB4 P–QN4, 8 B–N3 Q–K2*ch*

Black's pieces were about to be driven back by P–QR3 or harrassed by B–N5 and N × P–B5. What happens now and for the next few moves is more entertaining than shocking.

9 K–Q2!? P–N3

Black must respond to the threat of 10 R–K1; now he has 10 ... B–R3*ch*.

10 Q–K1 B–QN2, 11 N × P P–QR3, 12 P–Q6! P × P



After 12 ... P × P

Rubinow–Kashdan, 1948

White is playing with the inability of Kashdan's queen to move and her reluctance to exchange for the opposite number.

13 K–B3?! B–N2, 14 B–N5!

Now Black doesn't want to feed White's initiative with 14 ... Q × Q*ch*, 15 KR × Q*ch*, so he finds a way of exchanging queens while undoubling his queen pawns.

14 ... B × N*ch*, 15 K × B N–B3*ch*, 16 K–B3 Q–K4*ch*!, 17 Q × Q P × Q, 18 QR–Q1

But Rubinow still has an initiative and has acquired some enemy weaknesses on black squares to exploit.

18 ... QR–B1, 19 R–Q6 N–Q5*ch*, 20 K–Q3 B × P!?, 21 R–KN1 B–B3??

A blunder. Had Black captured on QN3 on either of the last two moves he might have the better of a likely drawn bishops-of-opposite-color ending. Kashdan tries too hard to win.

22 R × N!

And now 22 ... P × R would permit 23 R-K1*ch* and 24 B-R6*ch* with a crushing attack despite the absence of queens. Kash played **22 ... P-Q4, 23 B-B6 P-K5*ch*, 24 K-K3 0-0** and played on to adjournment time before resigning.

That left Kashdan, Ulvestad and Steiner at the top of the scoretable with young Kramer among those not far behind. The other junior of promise in the event was Evans, then already champion of the Marshall Chess Club. Evans was not in contention in the 1948 championship – his year would come. But he gave Steiner a scare in what was probably the most dramatic game of the event.

King's Indian Defense
***white* Evans, *black* Steiner**

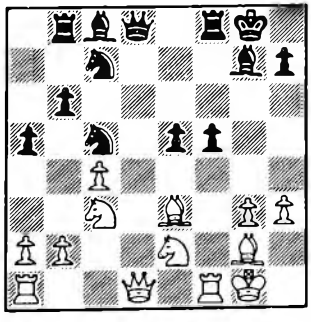
1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-KN3, 3 N-QB3 B-N2, 4 P-K4 P-Q3, 5 P-KN3 P-K4, 6 P-Q5 P-QR4, 7 B-N2 N-R3, 8 KN-K2 N-B4, 9 0-0 0-0, 10 P-KR3 N-K1, 11 B-K3 P-B4

White's opening system is rarely seen nowadays, but is not at all bad. He waits until he is fully developed before he initiates action with P-QN4 and P-QB5. If Black reacts on the kingside, as Steiner does here, White can try to damage his pawns and exploit an opened center.

12 P × P! P × P, 13 P-B4! P-N3, 14 P × P P × P

Now P-Q6 opens the long diagonal and attacks the rook on R8.

15 P-Q6 R-N1, 16 P × P N × P



After 16 ... N × P

Evans–Steiner, 1948

White's pieces are simply better developed than Black's (and would be even more so after 16 ... Q × P, 17 N–Q5). Here Evans can obtain a very favorable ending with 17 Q × Q and 18 QR–Q1 followed by N–Q5. But the young master, not the technician he would later become, prefers to keep the queens on the board.

17 N–Q5 N × N, 18 B × N*ch* K–R1, 19 K–R2 Q–B2, 20 Q–Q2 B–N2, 21 N–B3 QR–Q1

Both sides have to watch for two possibilities that could sharply turn the game to a big advantage: (a) White may overrun the center with 22 QR–Q1 and penetration along the Q file, and (b) Black may open up the kingside with ... P–B5. The immediate 21 ... P–B5 is unsound because of 22 P × P P × P, 23 B–Q4! P–B6*ch*, 24 K–R1 Q–N6, 25 B × B*ch* Q × B, 26 R–KN1.

But remember that king's bishop pawn.

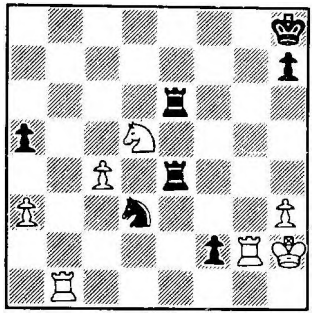
22 B–R6?! R–Q3, 23 N–N5

Now White bails out of the middle game because he fears what can happen on the kingside once he exchanges off his only good defensive piece in that region (... QB × B). The endgame is relatively equal after 23 N–N5 but Black still has dangerous chances with ... P–B5.

23 ... KB × B, 24 Q × B R × Q, 25 N × Q B–B1!, 26 B–N2 N–Q6, 27 P–N3 P–B5, 28 N–Q5 B–N5!

Black is bidding for a big advantage with ... B–K7 and ... P–B6. White's best chance, which could lead to an ironclad defensive position, is 29 P × P B–K7, 30 P–B5! B × R, 31 R × B followed by B–K4. But Evans, unsure about his endgame chances and perhaps upset by the change of fortunes, begins to slide:

29 P × P B–K7, 30 R–KN1? P × P, 31 B–B1 R–K1!, 32 P–R3 P–B6, 33 P–N4 B × B, 34 QR × B R–K7*ch*, 35 K–N3 P–B7, 36 R–N2 R–K5!, 37 K–R2 R(3)–K3, 38 P × P P × P, 39 R–QN1!



After 39 R–QN1

Evans–Steiner, 1948

In desperate straits the 16-year old finds help in tactics. Now on 39 ... R × P White mates with a big rook check.

39 ... R–K8!

This threatens to queen as well as capture the rook on QN1. But Evans has one last trick. Unfortunately for him, so does Steiner.

40 N–B6!

Again there is a mating check (40 ... R × N, 41 R–QN8*ch*). White also threatens 41 R–KN8 mate and this stops Black from making a queen.

40 ... P–B8(N)*ch*!!

"A miserable minor promotion," said Hans Kmoch, an Austrian master who was to become America's annotator extraordinaire. The knight enables Black to block the files and stifle all the mate threats:

41 K–N1 N–N6*ch*!, 42 R × R R × R*ch*, 43 K–R2 N–B8*ch*!, 44 K–R1 N–K6*ch*, 45 R–N1 R × R*ch*, 46 K × R N × P and White resigns.

Steiner, who, like Kmoch, had been born in Austria-Hungary, had little opposition left in South Fallsburg after this. For years after he emigrated to America Steiner had competed with the best New York players and now that most of them were absent from the championship he glided along towards first prize. He had long since left New York himself and in 1948 was now a confirmed West Coast booster. As Steiner put it to a friend, his obsessions were chess, California and California chess. And the last obstacle to his becoming the first non-New York champion since Showalter was Kashdan who, ironically, would soon move West himself and succeed Steiner as chess editor of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Seventh U.S. Championship, South Fallsburg, August 10–31, 1948

	S	K	K	U	H	R	S	A	E	S	S	S	P	P	H	W	H	A	S	J	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Steiner	X	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	12	6	1	15–4
2. Kashdan	½	X	½	½	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	12	5	2	14½–4½
3–4. Kramer	0	½	X	0	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	10	6	3	13–6
3–4. Ulvestad	1	½	1	X	1	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	10	6	3	13–6
5–7. Hesse, H.	0	0	1	0	X	1	½	0	½	0	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	4	5	12–7
5–7. Rubinow	0	1	0	0	0	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	10	4	5	12–7
5–7. Shainswit	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	6	12	1	12–7
8–10. Adams	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	X	1	1	0	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	10	3	6	11½–7½
8–10. Evans, L.	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	X	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	8	7	4	11½–7½
8–10. Shipman	½	0	0	½	1	0	½	0	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	8	7	4	11½–7½
11–12. Sandrin	½	0	0	1	0	½	½	1	0	½	X	½	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	5	6	10½–8½
11–12. Santasiere	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	X	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	7	7	5	10½–8½
13. Poschel, P.	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	X	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	5	6	8	8–11
14. Platz, J.	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	X	1	½	½	1	0	0	4	7	8	7½–11½
15. Heitner, I.	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	0	0	X	0	1	0	1	1	4	6	9	7–12
16. Whitaker, N.	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	1	X	1	½	0	1	4	4	11	6–13
17. Howard, F.	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	X	0	1	1	2	7	10	5½–13½
18. Almgren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	1	X	1	0	3	2	14	4–15
19. Suraci, A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	X	1	3	0	16	3–16
20. Janes, H.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	X	2	0	17	2–17

Going into the last round it was Steiner and Kashdan, tied at 14–4, while Kramer, at 12½–5½, was battling Ulvestad for third place. But Kramer was to play Kashdan in the last round while Steiner faced Franklin Howard, a New Jerseyan of no pronounced talent.

Nevertheless, Steiner was soon in trouble against Howard and needed some help from his nervous opponent to avoid a loss. Later errors turned what had looked like a Steiner collapse to a Steiner victory, on the 65th move. Kramer, meanwhile, was forcing a perpetual check against Kashdan. Steiner was the champion and the Marshall trophy moved west.

1951: No Master Plan, Just Masters

In 1951, once again, organizational problems seemed to overwhelm events at the board. In fact, they put an end to the string of biennial championships which had been constant since 1936 and had not been interrupted by world war.

The problem, at first, was the USCF's "master plan" for reorganizing the title. The Federation concluded that what the 1948 tournament proved was that something was very wrong: the event had gotten larger, and the level of play had declined. The USCF's solution was a three-year cycle of elimination contests, similar to the one that FIDE, the world chess federation, had just established to choose a world championship challenger. The cycle would begin with regional preliminaries, as proposed in the past, and then continue in its second year with a "Candidates Tournament." That would be made up of the regional qualifiers and certain seeded masters. In that way few would be seeded into the finals, and you would have to qualify by way of the candidates. The finals would be a smaller, more manageable event.

The trouble with the master plan is that nothing was organized in 1950, the "candidates" year. In order to salvage the three-year-cycle the USCF planned to hold a monster invitational event with 50 players from across the country in 1951. But this solution would be even worse than the 1948 problem, several of the invitees thought, and the guest list for the eighth championship had to be cut to 24 when the USCF found there was so little interest. Even then Steiner, the defending champion, turned down an invitation, as did Denker, Fine and Kashdan.

The 24 players who did show up in New York in June all had to go through an elimination stage to reach the 12-player finals in July. There were some new names again as well as familiar faces from the past, such as Kevitz, trying for the first time since 1936, and Hanauer, who had last

reached the finals in 1940. Only Honauer qualified. So did Albert Simonson, after an absence of 11 years. Also on hand were Evans, now three years stronger, Horowitz, Seidman, Bernstein and the heavy favorite, Reshevsky.

Sammy had not lost a game in a championship tournament—excepting the 1942 playoff—in 15 years, or more than 70 games. All of his rivals of the 1930's generation were retired or far behind him. This was obvious from the very start of the eighth championship when he easily defeated Horowitz, Simonson and Bernstein. He did have to concede a draw to Evans, who also started well, but it seemed likely that the youngster would fade in the stretch. Even though the tournament was much shorter than it had been in the past, Reshevsky was expected to put on one of his strong finishes, picking up strength the longer the event went on.

Yet Evans was clearly the coming talent. He was to win the U.S. Open and Speed (10 seconds a move) championships that year and had performed creditably on the U.S. Olympic team—top scorer among the Americans in fact—the previous year in Dubrovnik. A more technical method of gauging his strength was the new rating system just instituted by the USCF. The ratings were based on results achieved over the previous three years and thereby favored the older generation. Reshevsky was rated first in the country with a spectacular 2747 figure, followed closely by Fine. But Evans was the fourth highest rated, at 2554, just behind Horowitz.

So a draw with Evans was hardly a setback for Reshevsky. In previous tournaments Reshevsky had known who he had to beat to win the trophy. This time it looked like Seidman, who had won his first three games, and Reshevsky would be ready for him in their individual game—naturally in the last round—to battle for first place.

But Seidman was upset in the fourth round by Evans, who adopted one of the newfangled openings, the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defense, that were to characterize the new generation. Santasiere, who was never in contention, expressed the doubts of his colleagues about Evans' strange moves with Black (1 P–K4 P–QB4, 2 N–KB3 P–Q3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N–KB3, 5 N–QB3 P–QR3!, 6 P–KN3 P–K4!?) when he said: "I can never understand how they like P–K4 on the sixth move, but not on the first. But it is all the rage nowadays. In a certain sense chess is like measles."

The win over Seidman put Evans in first place and he maintained a slim lead into the seventh round. Reshevsky was waiting for the first mistake by the youngster, but to the surprise of almost everyone, it was the older man who broke first.

Sicilian Defense
white Mengarini, *black* Reshevsky

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 N-B3 N-KB3, 4 P-Q4 P × P, 5 N × P P-KN3, 6 P-B4 N-B3, 7 B-K2

White was Ariel Aldace Mengarini, a professional psychiatrist who had sneaked into the finals by beating Horowitz in one of the preliminary groups. At 30 he was too old to be considered one of the Evans-Bisguier-Byrne prodigies. But he was a solid master, one of the top 30 or so players in the country, and if he could get out of the opening alive he was as talented in the middle game as anyone in the event. Here he faces an opponent who also had regular problems in the opening.

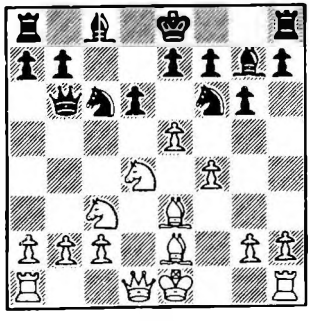
7 ... Q-N3?

There are similar variations of the Sicilian in which this works very well, e.g. 6 B-K3 B-N2, 7 B-K2 0-0, 8 0-0 N-B3, 9 P-B4?! Q-N3 which threatens 10 ... Q × P as well as 10 ... N × P!, 11 QN × N B × N. But this is a different animal—Black is uncastled.

8 B-K3!

Now 8 ... Q × P, 9 N(4)-N5 would leave Black scrambling to avoid the loss of his queen from 10 R-QN1, e.g. 9 ... Q-N5, 10 N-B7*ch* K-Q2, 11 B-Q2!! followed by N × R, N(7)-Q5 or P-K5.

8 ... B-N2?!, 9 P-K5!



After 9 P-K5

Mengarini-Reshevsky, 1951

A murderous shot. Black cannot open up the Q file because 9 ... P × P??, 10 N × N costs a queen (10 ... Q × N, 11 B-N5) or king (10 ... Q × B, 11 Q-Q8 *mate*).

9 ... N–Q2, 10 N–B5 Q × P, 11 N × B*ch* K–B1, 12 B–Q2!

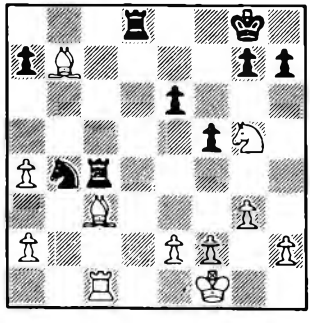
The threat is 13 N–N5 and 14 B–QB3, which would put Black out of his misery immediately. Reshevsky was known for surviving worse positions than this but he doesn't seem to get any energy out of his pieces in the remainder of this remarkable and historic game:

12 ... N–Q5, 13 0-0! Q × BP, 14 Q–K1 K × N, 15 P–B5! QP × P, 16 B–QB4! Q–N7, 17 P × P N–KB3, 18 P × BP B–K3, 19 B × B N × B, 20 QR–N1 Q–R6, 21 R × P KR–KB1, 22 K–R1 R × P, 23 Q × P R–Q1, 24 Q × N R × B, 25 N–K4! Q–K6? (25 ... R–K7, so as to meet 26 R × N with 26 ... R–K8*ch*, was his last try) **26 R × KP R–Q2, 27 Q × R*ch* Black resigns.**

This, in effect, marked the end of Reshevsky's reign as U.S. champion, a reign that had been interrupted before only when he chose not to defend the title. In a shorter tournament than he had been used to, such a loss could not be made up. There were *chances* for him to catch Evans after this, but nothing solid. Both men later came within inches of losing to Shainswit, for example—

Catalan Opening
white Shainswit, *black* Reshevsky

1 P–Q4 N–KB3, 2 P–QB4 P–K3, 3 P–KN3 P–Q4, 4 B–N2 P × P, 5 Q–R4*ch* B–Q2, 6 Q × BP N–B3, 7 N–KB3 N–QR4, 8 Q–Q3 P–B4, 9 P × P B × P, 10 N–K5 0-0, 11 N × B N × N, 12 0-0 Q–K2, 13 Q–N5! B–N3, 14 B–N5! Q–B4, 15 Q × Q B × Q, 16 B–Q2 N–QB3, 17 N–B3 QR–B1, 18 N–K4 B–K2, 19 KR–Q1 N–N3, 20 K–B1 KR–Q1, 21 QR–B1 N–R5!?, 22 P–N3 N–N7?, 23 R–K1 P–B4, 24 B–QB3! B–R6, 25 N–N5 N–R5, 26 P × N B × R, 27 R × B N–N5, 28 KB × P! R–B5



After 28 ... R–B5

Shainswit–Reshevsky, 1951

And now 29 K–N2 should win because 29 ... N × P can be met by 30 B–R5!! keeping his material. Other Black responses can be met by 30 N × KP or 30 B–N2. But Shainswit, in time pressure, played

29 B × N?? R × R*ch*, 30 K–N2 R–N1, 31 B–R3 R–B6! and White resigned.

Evans had a similar crisis against the Manhattan Chess Club regular, then rated among the nation's ten best:

Gruenfeld Defense
***white* Shainswit, *black* Evans**

1 P–Q4 N–KB3, 2 P–QB4 P–KN3, 3 N–QB3 P–Q4, 4 N–B3 B–N2, 5 Q–N3 P × P, 6 Q × BP 0–0, 7 P–K4 KN–Q2, 8 B–B4!? P–B3, 9 R–Q1 N–N3, 10 Q–N3 B–K3, 11 Q–B2 B–N5!, 12 B–K2 B × N!, 13 P × B B × P, 14 B–R6 R–K1, 15 P–KR4 P–K4!, 16 P–R5 QN–Q2, 17 P–B4 Q–K2, 18 B–KN5 Q–B4, 19 RP × P RP × P, 20 P–B5! B × P*ch*, 21 K–B1 B–K6!, 22 B × B Q × B, 23 R–Q3 Q–N4, 24 R–N1 Q–R3

Here the spectators were hoping for 25 B–N4 N–B1, 26 QR–N3 followed by P × P and B–B5. But Black has 25 ... N–B3! instead, the critical line being 26 R–R3 N × B!, 27 R × Q N–K6*ch*.

25 QR–N3 K–B1, 26 Q–Q3 P × P, 27 R–R3 Q–B5*ch*, 28 R–B3 Q–R3, 29 R–R3 Q–B3, 30 P × P P–K5!, 31 N × P Q × P*ch*, 32 R–B3! Q–Q4! (32 ... Q × N?, 33 Q–Q6*ch*!) **33 N–N5! N–K4!, 34 N–R7*ch* K–K2, 35 Q–R3*ch* Q–Q3, 36 Q–K3 N–Q4, 37 R × P*ch*?! K × R, 38 Q–N5 R–KN1! White resigns.**

Evans kept on winning and Reshevsky never had a chance. With two rounds to go the 19-year-old college student led by 1½ points and a few days later was crowned the youngest U.S. champion ever – younger even than Paul Morphy.

1952: Changing of the Guard

The natural outgrowth of Evans' victory in a short, 11-round tournament would have been a Reshevsky–Evans match of 12-to-16 games. But Reshevsky was already committed to an 18-game match with Miguel Najdorf at the end of the year – a kind of "Championship of the West."

Eighth U.S. Championship, New York, July 28–Aug. 19, 1951

	E	R	P	S	H	B	S	M	S	H	P	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Evans	X	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	8	3	0	9½–1½
2. Reshevsky	½	X	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	½	1	7	3	1	8½–2½
3. Pavey, M.	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	0	1	4	6	1	7–4
4. Seidman	0	0	½	X	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	5	3	3	6½–4½
5. Horowitz	0	0	½	0	X	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	4	3	4	5½–5½
6–7. Bernstein	0	0	½	1	1	X	½	1	½	0	½	0	3	4	4	5–6
6–7. Santasiere	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	1	½	2	6	3	5–6
8. Mengarini	0	1	0	0	0	0	½	X	1	½	½	1	3	3	5	4½–6½
9. Shainswit	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	1	6	4	4–7
10–12. Hanauer	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	5	5	3½–7½
10–12. Pinkus	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	X	0	1	5	5	3½–7½
10–12. Simonson	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	1	X	2	3	6	3½–7½

The next time the U.S. title was scheduled to be up for grabs was 1954.

Yet there was another challenger for Evans–Herman Steiner. The Californian had lost some of the positional accuracy that had characterized his play in the late 40's, but little of his confidence. In fact, there was bitterness during the Olympiad team tournament at Helsinki because both Steiner, as former U.S. champion, and Reshevsky, as world championship candidate, felt they were the one to play first board. In the end, they alternated the honor, with a consequent loss of talent by the American team.

But Steiner was able to arrange a match with Evans, for the title as well as a prize fund of $3,000, down from the $5,000 of Reshevsky–Horowitz in 1941. Again, as in 1946, the match was to be concentrated on the West Coast, with ten games in Los Angeles and six others set for San Francisco, Las Vegas, Reno and New York. The games in the East were later cancelled when the match result was a foregone conclusion.

Steiner had been one of the top American players for ten years but he was simply no match for Evans. He developed a dreadful opening position in the very first game and was forced to resign on his 30th move. The next day he showed signs of a comeback when he manhandled Evans' Nimzo-Indian Defense. But this turned out to be his highpoint of the match. The New Yorker won the next three games and was never in trouble again until the 12th game, when the match was effectively over. A typical game:

Sicilian Defense
Eighth Game, Los Angeles, 1952;
***white* Steiner, *black* Evans**

1 P–K4 P–QB4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N–B3, 5 N–QB3 P–Q3, 6 B–K2 P–KN3, 7 0–0 B–N2, 8 N–N3 0–0, 9 P–B4 P–QN4!

If White wants to play P–B4 he should prepare it with 9 B–K3. Evans' tactical point is 9 ... P–QN4, 10 B × P N × P!, 11 N × N Q–N3*ch*. Black will now be able to play ... P–N5, undermining the KP and forcing White into an uncomfortable exchange of pieces.

10 B–B3 P–N5, 11 N–Q5 N × N, 12 P × N N–QR4, 13 N × N Q × N

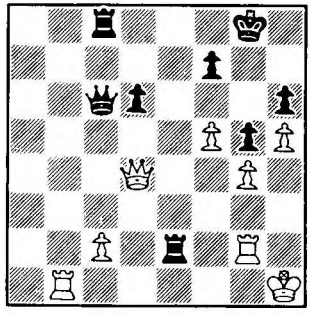
Normally this pawn structure would favor White because he can assault the K7 square and, if Black plays ... P–K3, the QP following QP × KP.

But White needs a knight to get the most out of the position (N–Q4–B6!), and he could not keep one on the board because of 13 N–Q4? Q–N3, 14 B–K3 N–B5. As played, Black gets more out of the QB file than White does from the K file.

14 R–K1 R–K1, 15 K–R1 B–B4, 16 P–N4!? B–Q2, 17 P–QR3 QR–B1, 18 R–K4 Q–B2!, 19 R–K2 B–N4, 20 R–N2 P–QR4, 21 P × P P × P, 22 P–R4 P–K4!

Now it is Black who takes over the center files and gradually pushes White off the board.

23 P × P *e.p.* R × P, 24 P–B5 KR–K1, 25 P–R5 Q–K2, 26 B–Q2 P–N4!, 27 B × QNP B × P, 28 R–QN1 B–K4, 29 B–R5 B–QB3, 30 B–N4 Q–N2, 31 B × B Q × B, 32 B–Q2 P–R3, 33 B–K3 R–K2, 34 B–Q4 B × B, 35 Q × B R–K7



After 35 ... R–K7

Steiner–Evans, 1952

36 R–KN1 Q–KB6!, 37 Q × P QR × P

Paralysis.

38 Q–N8*ch* K–R2 and White resigns

June 13–July 3, 1952

Evans	1	0	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	0	1	½	=	10
Steiner	0	1	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	1	0	½	=	4

1954: The Master Plan Fails

The woes of the championship multiplied in the next two years. This period was supposed to see the completion of the master plan's first three-year cycle. But again the cycle didn't turn: only a few of the regional preliminaries were held in 1952, the first year of the cycle. Local sponsors could be found to hold the preliminaries in the nation's large chess centers but not elsewhere. Chess organization, like playing skill, was not evenly distributed across the 48 states.

To make the best of a bad deal, the USCF planned a "candidates tournament" for Philadelphia in September 1953 anyway. Instead of being a meeting of the preliminary qualifiers, it was open to anyone with an expert (2000 points) rating and the entry fee of $25. This was a very unpopular arrangement, especially since the size of the event, 23 players, meant that Swiss System pairings would have to be used instead of the round robin that had been in place in every previous championship and qualifier. And, worst of all according to the competitors, the first prize was only $250.

But the players who did show up in Philadelphia were more attracted by the six qualifying places in the 1954 championship. Chief among them was Arthur Bisguier, then 23 and fresh out of an Army uniform. He had been a coming star a few years before when he won the 1950 U.S. Open and his first international tournament, at Southsea, England. But indifferent results since then had dimmed predictions for his future, and his 8½–1½ winning score at Philadelphia was seen by his many supporters as a very good sign. A gregarious young man, much more so than his rivals, Evans, Kramer and the Byrne brothers, Bisguier seemed to enjoy chess and life more than they. "I grew up with a taste for the finer things in life—but not necessarily with the financial wherewithal to satisfy that taste," he said.

The USCF didn't seem to have the wherewithal to hold the ninth championship, either. With dwindling resources, the organization could not afford a hotel exhibition hall as championship sponsors had for the previous 18 years. The Federation fell on the tournament site of last resort, the Marshall Chess Club, which generously offered its rooms to the 14 players. Bisguier, who attended college classes during the day, ended up sleeping at night in one of the Marshall's upstairs apartments.

The 14 who began play on May 29 were a relatively weak field. Bisguier was eighth on the USCF's latest rating list, and Evans, the defending champion, was only tenth. None of the five top rated players, Reshevsky, Robert Byrne, Kramer, Donald Byrne and Denker, accepted

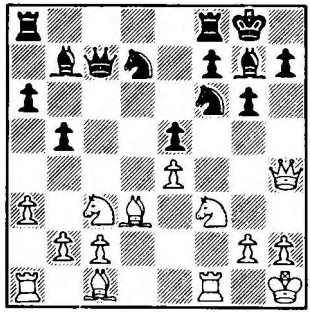
invitations. The strongest competition for the favorites Evans and Bisguier was expected from three high finishers of the previous U.S. Open: French émigré grandmaster Nicolas Rossolimo, Manhattan Chess Club champion Max Pavey and the latest Marshall Chess Club junior star, James T. Sherwin.

It was 20-year-old Sherwin—ranked only 24th in the nation—who took the early lead after five lively rounds. Then a Columbia University senior with law school in his future, he had had a taste of international play when he represented the United States in the world junior championship a year before. Now, with victories over the leaders of the old guard, Bernstein and Seidman, Sherwin was making a name as a senior master.

Evans and Bisguier fought back to tie him by Round 8 with 6–2 scores. But Evans suffered a devastating blow the next day, facing another Marshall Chess Club junior, Eliot Hearst.

Sicilian Defense
***white* Hearst, *black* Evans**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N-KB3, 5 N-QB3 P-QR3, 6 P-B4 Q-B2, 7 B-Q3 P-K4, 8 N-B3 P-QN4, 9 Q-K2 B-N2, 10 0-0 QN-Q2, 11 P-QR3 P-N3, 12 K-R1 B-N2, 13 P × P P × P, 14 Q-B2 0-0, 15 Q-R4



After 15 Q-R4

Hearst–Evans, 1954

White's attacking plan is fairly straightforward. He plans B-R6 followed by N-N5 and perhaps R-B3/QR-KB1. The attacking plan is, in fact, the only idea of promise in the position and this is why White's opening setup is regarded as simplistic. But it is not so easy to meet.

15 ... N-R4

Black would like to exchange black-squared bishops—provided he isn't mated. Therefore, 15 ... QR–K1!, 16 B–R6 N–R4 is better, e.g. 17 B × B K × B, 18 N–N5 P–R3.

16 N–N5 P–R3?!, 17 N–R3

Now the KRP is a target that Black must worry about (18 B–K2). His solution is to drive the enemy queen off with threats of exchange.

17 ... Q–Q1, 18 Q–B2 Q–B3, 19 Q–K1 Q–Q3, 20 B–K2!

This revives the problem on KR6. But if Black brings his other knight to KB3 now he is still safe since 20 ... QN–B3, 21 P–KN4?! N–B5, 22 N × N P × N, 23 B × P Q–B4 opens up the lines for Black's bishops and turns the initiative over to Black.

20 ... KN–B3?, 21 Q–R4 P–N4?, 22 QB × P!

For once Evans' defensive vision fails him. White's queen, knight and rooks will take up commanding positions on the kingside after this and he has no defense to the removal of his knight from KB3.

22 ... P × B, 23 KN × P Q–K2, 24 QR–Q1! KR–Q1

Or 23 ... QR–Q1, 24 B–N4 B–B3?!, 25 B × N R × B, 26 R × R B × R, 27 R × N threatening mate on KR7.

25 B–R5! N × B, 26 R × P! Q × R, 27 N × Q K × N, 28 Q × N*ch*

And Black resigned on the 56th move.

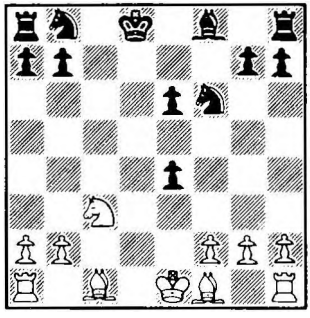
Sherwin only drew that round, so Bisguier took the lead for the first time. But the tournament was certain to be decided in the next three rounds as the three leaders met one another. The first meeting was between Evans and Bisguier, and the defending champion had to finesse his way out of a lost position to make a draw. The next day Evans won from Sherwin to severely damage the latter's chances, while Bisguier could only draw with Hans Berliner. The last big game was described in this manner by *Chess Review*: "...Sherwin, improving on the hitherto very cramped King's Indian which he'd been getting, had fine prospects vs. Bisguier—but he had some 26 moves to make in two minutes! The press around the table was impenetrable, but word leaked out that Sherwin could force a draw by repetition. 'Yes, but has he time to make the

moves?' was answered with a shrug. Then the grapevine reported that Bisguier had blundered. Speculation that it might be a ruse to exploit Sherwin's time trouble was presently answered by 'Sherwin has a mate in two.' All this was kibitzer's kriegspiel ... the flag on Sherwin's clock was trembling, he missed the win and lost on time."

Bisguier finished off with a quick last-round win to lengthen his lead to a full point. His play had become more solid despite occasional blunders and he was the only player to finish without a loss. Here was his crisp, classical style in action:

Queen's Gambit Declined
***white* Bisguier, *black* Hearst**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-KB3 P-Q4, 4 N-B3 P-B4, 5 P × QP BP × P!?, 6 Q × P P × P, 7 P-K4 P × P, 8 Q × Q*ch* K × Q, 9 N-KN5 B-K3, 10 N × B*ch* P × N



After 10 ... P × N

Bisguier–Hearst, 1954

Black's failure to play this risky opening as a true gambit (7 ... N-B3) has left him with a dubious endgame. Bisguier now unleashes a vigorous series of moves that involves a tricky sacrifice.

11 B-KN5! B-N5, 12 0-0-0*ch* K-K1

The king might be safer on B1 but Black would then get tied up in defense of his second KP (13 B-QB4).

13 N × P!! N × N, 14 R-Q8*ch* K-B2, 15 R × R N × B, 16 B-B4

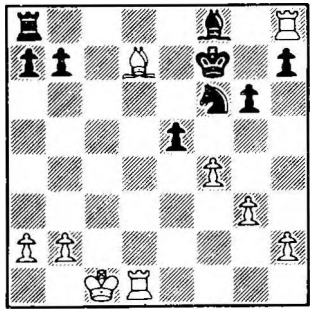
White has given up two minor pieces for a rook. But his positional benefits include a big lead in development—how will Black get his

queenside pieces moving? — and specific threats such as P–B4–5. Black's knight may even be trapped on KN4.

16 ... B–B1!, 17 P–B4 N–Q2!

Black has responded with a combination of his own (18 P × N R–B1, 19 P–N3 P–N4). Note that White's rook is in danger of becoming trapped by way of ... N–B3! ... P–KN3 and ... K–N2. A remarkable turn of events — but White has more resources.

18 B–N5! N–K5, 19 B × N N–B3, 20 R–Q1 P–KN3, 21 P–KN3 P–K4



After 21 ... P–K4

Bisguier–Hearst, 1954

Black's last trap: 22 P × P? B–R3*ch*. White would have won the KP in any event after he sacrifices back the exchange. The rest of the game was an example of Bisguier's fine technique, already one of the best in the country:

22 R × B*ch*! K × R, 23 P × P N–N1, 24 B–R3 R–K1, 25 R–Q5 R–K2, 26 K–Q2 K–B2, 27 K–Q3 R–B2, 28 P–K6*ch*! K–K2, 29 R–Q7*ch* R × R, 30 P × R N–R3, 31 B–K6! (stalemating the knight) **N–B4, 32 B × N P × B, 33 K–Q4 K × P, 34 K–K5 K–K2, 35 K × P and wins.**

Black could have had a similar version of this with 30 ... N–B3, 31 K–Q4 N × P, 32 B × N K × B, 33 K–Q5 K–K2, 34 K–K5.

The end of one of the weakest and clearly the most poorly financed championship was witnessed by a visiting delegation of Soviet grandmasters who were to defeat the U.S. by a 20–12 score in a match a few weeks later. American chess seemed to be in a bad way. Who would lead it out of this mess?

Ninth U.S. Championship, New York, May 29–June 13, 1954

	B	E	S	P	S	B	R	B	W	H	B	P	B	M	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Bisguier	X	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	0	10–3
2. Evans	½	X	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	6	6	1	9–4
3. Seidman	½	½	X	0	0	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	6	4	3	8–5
4–5. Pavey	0	0	1	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	5	5	3	7½–5½
4–5. Sherwin	0	0	1	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	4	7	2	7½–5½
6–7. Bernstein	½	½	1	0	0	X	½	1	0	1	½	0	1	1	5	4	4	7–6
6–7. Rossolimo, N.	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	0	1	½	½	1	1	3	8	2	7–6
8–9. Berliner, H.	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	X	1	1	1	0	0	½	4	5	4	6½–6½
8–9. Wachs, S.	½	0	0	½	½	1	1	0	X	0	1	0	1	1	5	3	5	6½–6½
10. Hearst, E.	0	1	0	½	½	0	0	0	1	X	0	1	1	1	5	2	6	6–7
11. Burger, K.	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	0	0	1	X	1	1	0	4	3	6	5½–7½
12. Pilnick	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	0	0	X	0	1	4	2	7	5–8
13. Brandts, P.	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	X	0	2	2	9	3–10
14. Mengarini	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	1	X	2	1	10	2½–10½

Chapter Eight

The Fischer Era (1957–1969)

On December 1, 1957, 14-year-old Bobby Fischer had a bad day. Playing in the North Central Open, the strongest of Swiss System tournaments held that Thanksgiving weekend, young Fischer finished dismally. He began the morning by losing a long, bishops-of-opposite-color ending to another junior star, Charles Kalme, who went on to share first prize. Fischer, disheartened, drew two more games that day and ended up in a huge tie for sixth place.

This may be worthy of only a footnote, but is a footnote worth remembering. For this was the last time Fischer would lose to an American for nearly four years. During this remarkable, Reshevsky-like string, the former prodigy would win four United States championships, encompassing 28 games won, 18 drawn and, of course, no losses.

The streak eventually was broken – by Reshevsky, in a match – and later in the opening round of Bobby's fifth championship. But Fischer, like Reshevsky after his close race with Kashdan in 1942, came back stronger than ever. In 1964 he exceeded Sammy's record of five championship tournament titles by piling up the most extraordinary record ever achieved in a modern, national competition: He won all 11 games, most of them against grandmaster-level opponents.

And before Bobby retired from domestic play – to chart his drive to the world championship – he had amassed eight national titles, most of which he won with the utmost ease. In none of the eight Fischer championships, did he win by a mere half point. In three championships he won by two or more points, clinching first prize with a day or two to spare. In four events he defeated his closest rival in their individual game. He was in a league all by himself.

And yet back in December 1957, shortly after that bad day in Milwaukee, Bobby's chances for immediate stardom were rated as ques-

tionable. This was a consensus based on two factors: First, Bobby was, after all, only 14 years old. He could win a tough Swiss System event, such as the 1957 U.S. Open, but could also perform pitifully against masters in a stronger round robin as he had done in 1956. And second, there was a wealth of junior talent that would likely improve at the same rate as Fischer, and probably would remain close to him in competition during the 1960s. It was assumed that Fischer would reach grandmaster level eventually, certainly by his early twenties. But would he become better than his elders—Evans, the Byrnes, Bisguier—or his contemporaries—such as William Lombardy and Raymond Weinstein? That was doubted.

Yet players rarely develop in slowly building steps. They make quick jumps in playing ability, usually followed by long periods when no progress is apparent. Fischer was in the process of a very big jump in 1957. The previous year had seen his introduction to top level competition—wearing his customary bluejeans and sweater—in the 3rd Lessing Rosenwald invitational in New York. There Bobby was beaten badly three times and lost a fourth game in a lengthy, bitter battle. His worst loss came at the hands of Bisguier, in an embarrassing 33-move game.

The following summer Fischer would manage a draw with Bisguier and thereby nose out Arthur, then the defending U.S. Open and U.S. Invitational champion, for the Open title. "Who could have seen in the early stages that by not winning against Fischer I created a monster?" Bisguier said of the game. But that was the last time the older man would be the favorite. Fischer won the next *13 games in a row* against Bisguier.

Bisguier was hardly over the hill. In 1957 he was only 28 years old, Evans was 25 and the other likely challengers were also young. There was 20-year-old Lombardy, who, like Fischer, was a protégé of master Jack Collins of Brooklyn. Lombardy had been New York State champion in 1955, two years after Sherwin held the title. Everyone seemed to hold the state championship at one time. Other former New York State champions included Reshevsky and Denker, of course, but also 20-year-old Edmar Mednis, 28-year-old George Kramer, and 29-year-old Hans Berliner.

The only active oldtimers in 1957 were Reshevsky, and Bernstein (46), Denker (44), Seidman (37), and Horowitz (50), who came out of retirement in the late 1960s. But with the constant exception of Reshevsky, and one performance by Seidman, *no member of the old guard would ever achieve a plus score in a championship again*. The 1930s and '40s generation was being replaced.

1957–58: Wunderkind

In 1957 came the 100th anniversary of the First American Congress, and like the arrival of Paul Morphy a century before, the establishment of Bobby Fischer as a dominating force was accompanied by an organizational coup. For several years the championship had been almost a will-o'-the-wisp, with doubts that it could be held at the scheduled time—or at all. The financial crises that had occured since 1948 and the haphazard 1954 championship demanded a new format.

It was provided by a small group of men, most of them wealthy members of the Manhattan Chess Club, who had banded together to raise money. It was money for chess—but not necessarily for the USCF—and they called themselves the American Chess Foundation. The group included ACF president Alexander Bisno; his successor, advertising executive Rosser Reeves; and financiers Maurice Kasper, Jose Calderon and Lessing Rosenwald. Since the 2000-member USCF had had difficulty managing the three-year-cycle for the championship and raising funds for it, the ACF declared that they would choose the best players for small, topflight events and finance them.

The immediate result was three very strong Rosenwald invitational tournaments and three matches. Reshevsky won two of the tournaments, finishing third in the other behind Evans and Bisguier, and defeating Lombardy, Bisguier and Donald Byrne in the matches. Sammy's superiority was obvious and he never lost more than one game per event. In fact, his loss to Walter Shipman in the first Rosenwald tournament in late 1955 was his first defeat by an American since the game with Mengarini more than four years before.

The Foundation's success contrasted sharply with the USCF's difficulties and it seemed to be with some relief that the Federation agreed to let the fourth Rosenwald be designated as the 10th U.S. championship. Also it would be a FIDE zonal tournament. The first two finishers would qualify for further events in the elimination contests run by the world federation to select a contender for Mikhail Botvinnik. The U.S. championship now had an international impact.

What was remarkable about the *first* Fischer championship was not so much that he won, but how surprising it seemed at the time. Fischer had played quite a good deal during 1956 and 1957, much of it highly visible. His picture appeared almost constantly in *Chess Review* and occasionally in daily newspapers. The photos showed him giving simultaneous exhibitions, or winning the 1957 U.S. Open, or losing a two-game match to former world champion Max Euwe ½–1½. But to win the championship? It seemed much too soon.

Bisguier was speaking for many of his colleagues when he declared Reshevsky to be the favorite in 1957. Evans, he said, also was a major contender, Lombardy would be a bit behind him and Robert Byrne would be in the running (he, however, declined his invitation at the last minute). Fischer, predicted the defending champion, "should finish slightly over the center mark in this tournament."

Bobby began with promise, crushing Arthur Feuerstein, a 22-year-old computer specialist, in the first round with the latest positional treatment of the Sicilian Defense. Then, after an escape against Seidman, he gave Reshevsky a full battle for 47 moves and their draw was a fair result. Two points out of three was a fair start. But Fischer was only beginning.

In Round 4 he accepted Bernstein's piece sacrifice and kept it, then the next day turned back Bisguier's counterattack and stood only a half point behind Reshevsky with a score of 4–1. A draw with Berliner, which could have gone either way up to the last of the 57 moves, cost him some ground. But then came five straight wins—over Sherwin, Kramer, Mednis, Lombardy and Attilio DiCamillo, one of his former teachers.

What added to the surprise was the maturity of Bobby's play. Consider this revealing contrast between Kramer, the player once considered a possible successor to Reshevsky, and Fischer, the intense youngster who would soon make everyone forget Reshevsky.

King's Indian Reversed
white **Kramer,** ***black*** **Fischer**

1 N-KB3 N-KB3, 2 P-KN3 P-KN3, 3 B-N2 B-N2, 4 0-0 0-0, 5 P-Q3 P-Q3

A few years later Fischer put forth the idea—probably facetiously, but no one could tell—that in this position Black was already a little bit better. In 1957, however, he played this setup with the White pieces as well as with Black. Neither side commits himself in the center early but Kramer soon shows he misunderstands the nature of the battle.

6 P-K4 P-B4, 7 P-B3?! N-B3, 8 N-K1? R-N1!, 9 P-KB4 N-K1!

Fischer shows familiarity with this kind of position, one of the most sophisticated of post-WWII chess. He prepares for ... P-QN4–5 in the hopes of forcing White to concede pawn control of his Q4 (such as by P-QB4). Fischer had played over countless games with this idea in similar positions, perhaps even this one. Kramer, on the other hand, was

more an improviser than theoretician, and more of a tactician than a positional gourmet. He plays this stage very uncertainly, preparing for something but he doesn't seem to know what. For P–B5? for P–K5?

10 B–K3 B–Q2, 11 N–Q2 P–QN4

Now White finds himself on the defensive because of Black's positional threat of ... P–N5 and ... N–B2–N4, concentrating a pawn and two pieces on QB6 and, indirectly, two minor pieces and a rook on QN7. Rather than take precautions with Q–B2 or concede Q4 with P–B4, White goes in for tactics.

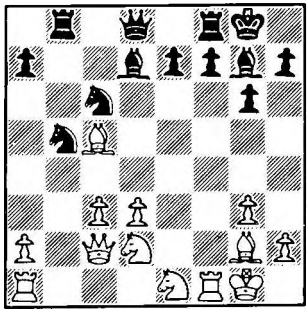
12 P–K5?! P × P

This exchange appears to activate White's pieces. But young Fischer sees that by clearing the center of pawns it is his KB and QR that will profit the most.

13 B × P P × P, 14 R × P N–B2, 15 R–KB1 P–N5

White's queenside is under tremendous pressure and cannot be held together indefinitely (16 P–Q4 N–K3).

16 Q–B2 P × P, 17 P × P N–N4!



After 17 ... N–N4

Kramer–Fischer, 1957

The triumph of modern opening strategy. White's center pawns are under disguised but potent attack. He cannot even give up control of Q4 any more because it would cost him the game tactically. And after the horrible retreat 18 N–N1 Black wins matter-of-factly with 18 ... Q–R4 and either 19 ... QR–B1 or a capture on B6.

18 P-Q4 R-B1, 19 Q-N2 N × BP!

The tactical "shot" as Fischer would call it. White's game unravels completely:

20 Q × N N × P!, 21 Q-N4 N-K7*ch*!, 22 K-R1 R × B, 23 Q × R B × R, 24 N(K)-B3 B-N2, 25 R-K1 N-B6, 26 Q × RP B-K3, 27 P-QR3 Q-Q3, 28 Q-R5 B-Q4!, 29 N-QN1? R-R1, 30 Q-N4 Q × Q, 31 P × Q B × N, 32 N × N (32 B × B R-R8) **B × B*ch* and White resigns.**

During Fischer's streak Reshevsky had been upset by Sherwin when he tried one of Fischer's favorite modern openings, the King's Indian Defense. Just a matter of weeks before, Reshevsky had won perhaps the strongest international tournament held in the United States in 30 years (Dallas 1957) but was now trailing a 14-year-old boy by half a point. He would have to pull out another last-round "Reshevsky finish." This time it would be harder than ever. Reshevsky was to have White against Lombardy, who was battling for third place behind Sherwin, while Fischer had White against an outsider, Abe Turner. Turner, a chubby, 34-year-old drama student, was an old blitz partner of Fischer, and Bobby was not expected to exert himself on the final day. A draw was likely.

In later years Fischer would never do what he did that January 6, 1958: he let someone else win the tournament for him. Bobby drew with Turner in 18 moves and then went off to another room for a session of five-minute games. Periodically after that he peeked into the tournament room to see what was happening. A Reshevsky win would mean a tie for first place, the first in 15 years. Anything else would give Fischer clear first.

There was no clue until an excited Bobby, returning to his speed game, drew on his Manhattan Chess Club kibitzing slang to say: "Gee, Lombardy's playing like a house." He was:

King's Indian Defense
***white* Reshevsky, *black* Lombardy**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-KN3, 3 N-QB3 B-N2, 4 P-K4 P-Q3, 5 B-K2 0-0, 6 N-B3 P-K4, 7 0-0 N-B3, 8 P-Q5 N-K2, 9 N-K1 N-Q2, 10 N-Q3 P-KB4

The story of this variation reads like the history of most modern opening systems. First (about 1952) it seemed clear that White had a major advantage – he was supposed to win quickly on the queenside by playing

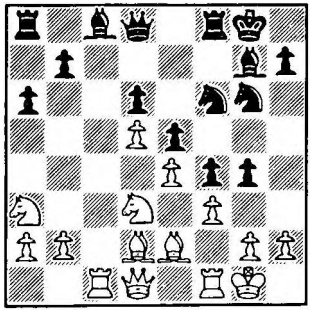
P-QN4 and P-QB5 and then opening up lines for his queen and rooks. White won some well-publicized games with this strategy, but in the late 50s Black began to turn the tables, and won consistently in master tournaments by rushing up all his kingside pawns to get to White's king. This game was played during Black's comeback period and before the discovery of new ideas—such as 11 P × P, or 11 B–Q2 or even 10 P–B3 P–KB4, 11 P–KN4!?—that left the issue "with chances for both sides."

11 P–B3? P–B5, 12 B–Q2 P–KN4, 13 R–B1 N–KN3, 14 N–N5?!

Reshevsky's idea is more aggressive than it may seem. The knight can, of course, be punched back by 14 ... P–QR3. But then White will play it to QR3 and, after P–QB5 and BP × QP, to QB4 where it supports B–R5 and B–N4.

That would be a typical example of how White wins when he does win. But his strategy pays no attention to the kingside where ... P–N5 is about to break like a shockwave. White should be playing the direct 14 P–QN4 or 14 N–B2 to hold some control of his KN4.

14 ... P–QR3, 15 N–R3 N–B3, 16 P–B5 P–N5!, 17 P × QP P × QP



After 17 ... P × QP

Reshevsky–Lombardy, 1958

White's position is already critical. He can't get enough pressure on the queenside to deflect Black's attention. Reshevsky sees that 18 P × P N × KP would be a tacit admission that his opening policy has been a bust. Still, with 19 B–KB3 he could have fought hard.

18 N–B4 P–N6!

If this succeeds in opening the kingside, the game is positionally decided. White was hoping that Black would exchange pawns on KB3,

Tenth U.S. Championship, New York, Dec.–Jan. 1957–58

	F	R	S	L	B	D	F	M	S	B	B	D	T	K	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	8	5	0	10½–2½
2. Reshevsky	½	X	0	0	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	8	3	2	9½–3½
3. Sherwin	0	1	X	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	7	4	2	9–4
4. Lombardy	0	1	½	X	½	½	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	5	5	3	7½–5½
5. Berliner	½	0	½	½	X	0	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	4	6	3	7–6
6–8. Denker	½	0	0	½	1	X	0	1	½	0	1	0	1	1	5	3	5	6½–6½
6–8. Feuerstein	0	0	1	½	1	1	X	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	4	5	4	6½–6½
6–8. Mednis	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	0	1	½	½	1	1	3	7	3	6½–6½
9. Seidman	½	0	½	1	½	½	0	1	X	0	1	0	1	0	4	4	5	6–7
10–11. Bernstein	0	½	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	X	0	1	½	0	4	2	7	5–8
10–11. Bisguier	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	½	0	1	C	½	0	1	4	2	7	5–8
12–13. DiCamillo	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	½	1	0	½	X	0	1	3	3	7	4½–8½
12–13. Turner	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	1	1	X	½	2	5	6	4½–8½
14. Kramer	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	1	0	0	½	X	2	2	9	3–10

after which his followup was not clear. But Lombardy's move suggests that Black will attack not KN7, but KR7, which is indefensible.

White cannot permit 19 ... P × P*ch* followed by ... N–R4–N6, but he would be more vulnerable after 19 P × P? P × P followed by knights hopping to B5 or KR5. Reshevsky had likely counted on blocking the position but overlooked Lombardy's next move.

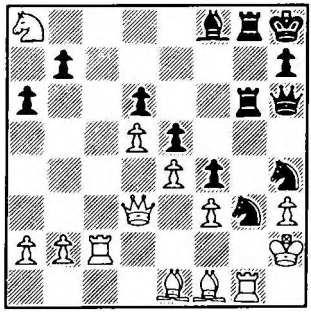
19 P–KR3 B × P!, 20 P × B Q–Q2

Now the kingside opens up since 21 ... Q × P cannot be permitted and 21 K–N2 would be met by a knight check. It was for this early idea plus the fine buildup that follows that Lombardy won the brilliancy prize.

21 N–B2 P × N*ch*, 22 K–R2! Q–K2, 23 R × P N–R4!, 24 B–N4 QR–Q1, 25 Q–Q3 N–R5, 26 R–KN1 N–N6, 27 B–B1 R–B3, 28 R–QB2 R–N3, 29 B–K1 B–R3!

Lombardy is playing more powerfully and securely than Fine or Horowitz had in similar last-round battles with Reshevsky. But then Black's position is easier to play than the other positions, e.g. 30 B × N P × B*ch*, 31 R × P B–B5.

30 N–N6 K–R1, 31 B–N2 QR–KN1, 32 R–B8 B–B1!, 33 R–B2 Q–N2, 34 N–R8!? Q–R3, 35 B–B1



After 35 B–B1

Reshevsky–Lombardy, 1958

The threat was 35 ... N × B, 36 R × N Q × P*ch*! and mates with a rook. It doesn't make sense that White should be able to defend with 35 B–R1 and he can't (35 ... N × B!, 36 R × N R–N7*ch*). After all, Black has five pieces on the kingside and White has only two to speak of.

35 ... N × B*ch*, 36 R × N Q–N2!, 37 Q–K2 R–N7*ch*, 38 Q × R N × Q and White resigned after 39 R–N1 N × B!, 40 R × Q B × R.

Still, there were doubts, even by Bobby. Does this make you the best player in the United States?, the new champion was asked. "No, one tournament doesn't mean much," he said. "Maybe Reshevsky...."

1958–59: Like a Grandmaster

By the time of the next championship, 12 months later, Fischer was a grandmaster, an international star and the talk of world chess. Only the even brighter star of Mikhail Tal, six years older than Fischer and already on the way to the world championship, took attention away from the 15-year-old American titleholder.

The task facing Fischer in December, 1958, was formidable. No one had repeated as U.S. champion in the previous six tournaments and, in fact, winning the title seemed something of a jinx: Defending champion Bisguier had scored an embarrassing 5–8 in 1957, Denker was not in contention in 1946 and Steiner did not even try to defend his title in 1951. Moreover, the 1958–59 championship—so designated because the tournament became that year and for the next several years a Christmas–New Year's period event—was extremely strong. It may have been the strongest Fischer ever faced. Virtually all of the top-scorers of the previous year were back and they were joined by both Byrne brothers and Pal Benko.

Benko in particular was regarded as a threat to Fischer. Born in France to Hungarian parents, Benko had become one of the leading European juniors during the mid-50's and was making progress as quickly as Fischer. He had been involved (secretly) in the 1956 Hungarian revolt but was later permitted to play first board on his country's team in the 1957 Student Olympiade in Iceland—where he promptly defected. Since that fall he had been living in the United States and improving his game. Benko had improved so much that he finished equal third, ahead of Fischer whom he had beaten in their individual game, at the 1958 Interzonal at Portorozh. If anyone posed a danger to the champion, it appeared to be the newcomer. And, to round out the field, the USCF had begun seeding players for special reasons. Most invitees where chosen because of their rating or because they held the grandmaster title. But in 1958–59 the Federation also invited the U.S. junior champion, a 17-year-old Brooklynite, very much in the Fischer mold, named Raymond Weinstein. He turned out to be a cousin of Bisguier—and quite promising.

As in 1957 the tournament was held at the Henry Hudson Hotel, soon to be the home of the Manhattan Chess Club, and it began at much

the same tempo as the previous year. Fischer again took off well, but the degree of his success was concealed in sealed move envelopes: His first four games were adjourned and so his standing on the scorechart was blank during the first week of play. But after the last of the 235 moves of these games were finished it was discovered that Fischer had scored 3½–½ and already was in clear first place.

Then came a draw with Benko—who was making an inauspicious debut in American chess—followed by the sensation of the tournament:

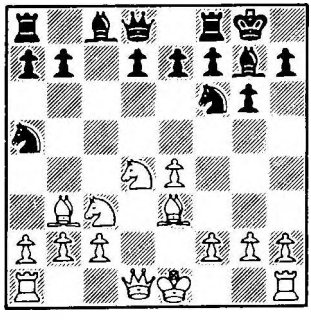
Sicilian Defense
white **Fischer,** ***black*** **Reshevsky**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P P-KN3, 5 N-QB3 B-N2, 6 B-K3 N-B3, 7 B-QB4 0-0

This formation by White, followed by P-B3, Q-Q2 and 0-0-0, was the system Fischer had placed his personal stamp on. His victory with it over Bent Larsen of Denmark in Portorozh that summer was the game that had made much of the chess world take notice of him. But it was still a very new, untested opening.

In the same Portorozh tournament against Oscar Panno of Argentina he played 8 P-B3? and had to think for more than an hour for an answer to 8 ... Q-N3!, which threatens 9 ... Q × P as well as 9 ... N × P!, 10 P × N B × N. Fischer had learned a thing or two by the time of the championship.

8 B-N3! N-QR4?



After 8 ... N-QR4

Fischer–Reshevsky, 1958

But Reshevsky had not. He was apparently relying on slim preparation and instincts, a dangerous policy in a theoretical opening. What happens

11th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 18–Jan. 15, 1958–59

	F	R	S	B	B	E	L	B	B	K	M	W	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	6	5	0	8½–2½
2. Reshevsky	0	X	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	5	5	1	7½–3½
3. Sherwin	0	0	X	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	4	5	2	6½–4½
4–7. Bisguier	0	½	½	X	1	0	½	½	½	1	1	½	3	6	2	6–5
4–7. D. Byrne	½	½	0	0	X	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	3	6	2	6–5
4–7. Evans	½	0	0	1	0	X	0	1	1	½	1	1	5	2	4	6–5
4–7. Lombardy	½	0	½	½	0	1	X	1	½	½	½	1	3	6	2	6–5
8. Benko	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	X	1	½	1	1	3	5	3	5½–5½
9–10. R. Byrne	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	X	½	1	½	1	6	4	4–7
9–10. Kalme	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	8	3	4–7
11–12. Mednis	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	X	½	0	6	5	3–8
11–12. R. Weinstein	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	0	6	5	3–8

next had been analyzed in depth in a recent Russian magazine, the kind Fischer had been reading since the seventh grade. Better was 8 ... P–Q3, which threatens 9 ... N–KN5, or the immediate 8 ... N–KN5!?, 9 Q × N N × N as Reshevsky played against Fischer in their nontitle match two years later.

9 P–K5! N–K1?

Remarkably enough, Black is already lost. His knight has no good retreat (9 ... N–R4, 10 P–N4!) and the interpolation of 9 ... N × B doesn't really interpolate (9 ... N × B, 10 P × KN! N × R, 11 P × B N × P*ch*, 12 N × N with material equality but clear positional superiority for White).

10 B × P*ch*!!

Fischer didn't have to think about this move: It was "book." He wins the queen after 10 ... K–R1 (or 10 ... R × B), 11 N–K6!

10 ... K × B, 11 N–K6!

Reshevsky played 11 ... P × N, 12 Q × Q and resigned 30 moves and a time control later. The alternative was 11 ... K × N, 12 Q–Q5*ch* K–B4, 13 P–N4*ch* K × P, 14 R–N1*ch* K–R5, 14 B–N5*ch* and mates. Games have been decided in the championship by opening analysis, but never so brutally or involving so much as this game.

This debacle removed Reshevsky from the list of contenders until it was too late. Even after draws with Donald Byrne and Evans, Fischer was still coasting along in first. He had one chance to throw the tournament away and that came in the 10th round:

Fischer held White against Bisguier and his Ruy Lopez failed to make any impression on one of the world's experts on the closed treatment of the opening. Horowitz, Bisguier's friend and sometime employer, was writing an opening book and was gratified to see Arthur working extra hard. Horowitz had plenty of examples of Lopez games won by White but none by Black. Bisguier appeared to be on the verge of the clean, thematic victory Horowitz needed: He was forcing Fischer to close off the center, then he was expanding on the queenside and then switching to the kingside. Black's pieces began to swarm over Fischer's king position and for the first time in the tournament—the first time in two tournaments—the youngster was clearly losing.

But suddenly there was a slight error by the older man, and then another, and after an exchange of pieces his advantage was gone. Black

pawns were revealed to be weak when they no longer had pieces around for defense. And finally there was a major blunder – a rarity for Bisguier in the endgame. He threw away a cold draw and walked into the Lucena position, a "book win" known for centuries.

The first year had shown Fischer could outplay his elders in the middle-game and opening. But now he was doing it in the endgame too.

1959–60: Going On Three

And by the time the *next* championship rolled around, Fischer was confirmed as a world championship contender, having finished a creditable fifth in the candidates tournament in Yugoslavia earlier that year. By contrast, the 12th U.S. championship may not have seemed so prestigious to the world's youngest grandmaster, a 16-year-old, two-time champion going on three-time. Still, with more than two years to go before the next candidates tournament Bobby was content to merely prove his superiority over the Americans.

His superiority – even over Reshevsky – was becoming clearer every year. Yet Fischer had doubts and they were expressed in complaints to the tournament organizers about irregularities in procedures which he said could unfairly deprive him of the title. This was the beginning of several such complaints, and in 1959–60 they centered on the practice of choosing lots in private – outside the presence of the players – to determine who played whom and when during a tournament. Fischer said the practice was just unfair. He threatened to forfeit his games if the pairings were not redrawn in public.

The tournament officials were no less firm than L. Walter Stephens had been 16 years before. One of the directors of the event was Hans Kmoch, who had double-forfeited two players in the third Rosenwald tournament because neither of them, Hearst and Mednis, had kept an accurate scoresheet. Kmoch was a hanging judge.

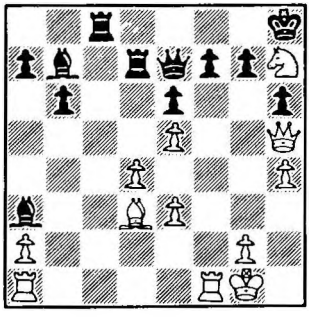
Fischer's protest had some merit, the officials felt, but to throw out the pairings after they had been publicized was certain to antagonize other players in the event. So the tournament committee stood firm. And just in case Fischer went ahead with his threat, they primed a substitute for him, a 22-year-old pre-med student named Anthony Saidy, to play if Fischer didn't. In the end, Fischer did.

That was hardly the end of the tension. Fischer again won the title, but even in the absence of Evans, Lombardy and Donald Byrne it was not entirely easy. He needed to use all his resources. As a rapidly

maturing professional, those resources included using the clock, the sealed move envelope and the rulebook, as well as the 64 squares. This became evident in the second round when he faced Robert Byrne, then a Midwestern college instructor and a part-time player of immense unrealized talent. For years it was his brother, Donald, who earned the attention, winning the 1953 U.S. Open, for example, or defeating Yefim Geller 3–1 in the 1955 U.S.-U.S.S.R. match. But Robert, two years older than Donald, seemed to need only time and opportunity to develop into a strong grandmaster—equal or superior to his high school era colleagues, Evans and Bisguier.

After a spirited opening as White, Byrne held a huge advantage.

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-QB3 P-Q4, 4 P × P N × P, 5 N-B3 P-QB4, 6 P-K3 N-QB3, 7 B-B4 N × N, 8 P × N B-K2, 9 0-0 0-0, 10 Q-K2 P-QN3, 11 R-Q1 Q-B2, 12 P-K4 B-N2, 13 B-K3 QR-B1, 14 B-Q3 P × P, 15 P × P B-R6?, 16 P-K5! N-N5, 17 N-N5! P-KR3, 18 B-R7*ch*! K-R1, 19 Q-R5 N-Q4, 20 B-Q3 Q-K2, 21 N-R7! N × B, 22 P × N KR-Q1, 23 R-KB1 R-Q2, 24 P-R4!



After 24 P-R4

R. Byrne–Fischer, 1959

Kmoch, writing in *Chess Review*, called Byrne's last move a "rescue action for the paratrooper knight." More accurately, it is part of a winning combination that will become clear after 25 N-N5, e.g. 25 ... R(2)-B2, 26 N-N5! P × N, 27 P × P*ch* or 26 ... R-KB1, 27 R-B6! K-N1, 28 QR-KB1! with a speedy resolution (R × RP) of the position in White's favor.

24 ... R-B6!

Here Fischer begins to wake up after his bad opening. And he plays not so much against Byrne, as against Byrne's clock. White had taken a good deal of time to reach this position and needed only a few more good

moves—uncomplicated by enemy counterplay—to score the point. Fischer's task was not so much to equalize but to make the win as hard to achieve as possible. His last move forces Byrne's hand since the attacked bishop has no place to go and 25 QR–Q1 R × B!, 26 R × R K × N or 25 B–N5 R(2)–B2! favors Black.

25 N–N5! R × B, 26 R × P R–Q7!

Black finds the moves to keep White's clock ticking; 27 R × Q leads to a powerful position for Black after 27 ... R × P*ch*, 28 K–B1 R × R.

27 P–K4!

A fine answer by Byrne. Fischer would have no time now to save his queen (27 ... Q–K1, 28 Q–N6) so ...

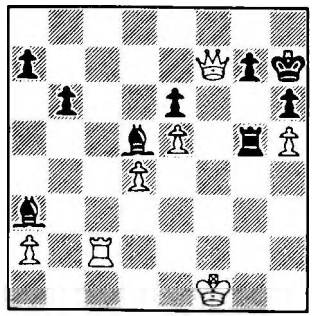
27 ... Q × R, 28 N × R*ch* R × N!, 29 Q × R B × P

Only two bishops for the queen, but Black has plenty of piece activity. Fischer didn't agonize over the queen sacrifice. He thought about 15 to 20 minutes—a lot of time for him—and got the last three moves over with so that he would have an hour for the 11 moves left before the time control was reached. More important, he did not give Byrne any extra time—White had only five minutes left here. With a few more minutes to think, Byrne might have avoided all the trouble with 30 Q × KP!

30 R–K1? R × P*ch*, 31 K–B1 B–Q4!, 32 R–K2 R–N5!

A good time-pressure move. Not only is preserving rooks the best policy theoretically but here there are specific instances when Black has better chances of forcing the game with more material on the board.

33 R–QB2 K–R2, 34 P–R5 R–N4!



After 34 ... R–N4

R. Byrne–Fischer, 1959

35 K–K2?

Byrne, with no time left to speak of, puts off a decision about grabbing Black's QRP. He sees that he can repeat the position by moving his king around until move 40, and then adjourn with the benefit of another hour of time.

35 ... R–N7*ch*, 36 K–Q3? R–N6*ch*, 37 K–K2 R–N7*ch*, 38 K–K3? R–N6*ch*, 39 K–B2 R–N4!

The same position as five moves ago is reached, but with one difference. This is no opportunity for 40 Q × RP now because 40 ... R–N7*ch* would spear a rook.

40 K–K2

This position is probably still winnable by White. With the time control reached, Byrne saw that he could meet another rook check at N2 with 41 K–B1! (41 ... R × R, 42 Q–N6*ch*). This meant White would escape the checks and threaten 41 Q × RP once again. But ...

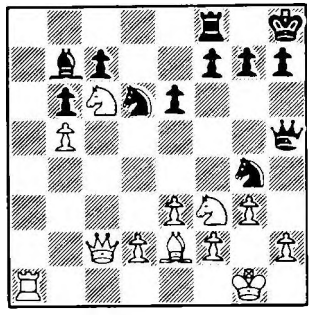
But he should have played K–K2 on move 36 or 38. Now it was too late because Fischer checked his scoresheet and called over a tournament official. He pointed out that 40 ... R–N7*ch*, regardless of its tactical value, would repeat the position previously seen at move 35 and move 37. It was a draw by way of the three-time repetition rule. Had Fischer also been short of time he might not have been able to figure this out from his scoresheet—and an improper claim would have been immediately fatal. But the claim was legitimate and Fischer had escaped.

A draw in the third round left the standings in something of a surprise. For the first time in three years, Fischer was nowhere near first place. His score was 1–1, with one game adjourned, seventh best in a field of 12 and far beind Reshevsky's 2½–½. But the adjourned game turned out to be another long win over Bisguier, and Reshevsky was promptly upset by Seidman. After another day it was Fischer and Seidman in the lead, followed by Reshevsky and young Raymond Weinstein. (He was "young Weinstein" even though two years older than Bobby.)

Seidman soon fell back; a shock was delivered him by his longtime Marshall Chess Club friend, Bernstein. The opening was a partial surprise as it appeared to be the first time 1 P–QN4!? was seen in championship play. But the feature of the game was a diabolical trap set by Bernstein:

Orangutan Opening
white Bernstein, *black* Seidman

1 P-QN4 N-KB3, 2 B-N2 P-K3, 3 P-N5! P-QR3, 4 P-QR4 P × P, 5 P × P R × R, 6 B × R P-Q4, 7 N-KB3 B-K2, 8 P-K3 QN-Q2, 9 B-K2 0-0, 10 0-0 N-K1, 11 P-B4 B-B3, 12 N-B3 P × P, 13 B × P N-Q3, 14 B-K2 P-QN3, 15 N-R2! B-N2, 16 B × B Q × B, 17 N-N4 N-K4, 18 N-Q4 Q-N4!, 19 P-N3 Q-R3, 20 Q-B2 Q-R6, 21 N(N)-B6 K-R1, 22 R-R1 N-N5, 23 N-B3 Q-R4



After 23 ... Q-R4

Bernstein–Seidman, 1959

24 R-R4!!

This stops 24 ... N × NP (25 N-R4 P-B4, 26 B × QN!) but what about the equally threatened KRP? Even if advised that there is a trap somewhere in this position it is hard to guess what White has up his sleeve.

24 ... N × RP?, 25 KN-K5! Q × B

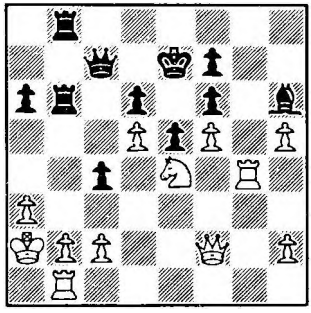
Black's move was forced. Now 26 K × N Q × P*ch* wins for him.

26 Q × P*ch*!! Black resigns

Black is mated by a rook check followed by a knight check.

After seven rounds it was Fischer in the lead, a half point ahead of Reshevsky, with everyone else at least two points back. The only player who was completely out of the running was Robin Ault, the seeded junior champion. Ault was most definitely *not* confirming the rightness of the USCF's decision to invite the most promising youngster. He eventually lost all 11 of his games and the special seeding of junior stars was dropped for eight years.

With two men clearly ahead the tournament seemed headed for one of those Reshevsky-Fine-Kashdan finishes of the '30s and '40s. But the times had changed. Reshevsky was still exceptionally strong, yet he was being surpassed by an even greater talent. Fischer crushed Bernstein in Round 8 to maintain his lead and then had to engineer one more escape the following day.



Mednis–Fischer, 1959
After 27 ... R–N3

With his usual resourceful handling of the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian, the champion had obtained an advantage but then ran into trouble. Mednis was making his third try in the championship and had earned a reputation as a serious, commonsense player who rarely took risks and stuck to what he knew. He usually managed to finish at least in the middle of the tournament, thanks to what Bisguier called "wonderful nerves." Moreover, Mednis was becoming something of a problem opponent for Fischer. In the 1957–58 championship Bobby had misplayed an opening edge and found himself in grave difficulty with his king castled queenside and all Mednis' pieces lined up against it. But a surprise combination turned the tables. Now, with colors reversed but the situation very similar, Mednis looks for revenge.

28 N × BP!!

This is a brilliant move which does several things. It cuts open the shell of protective pawns around Black's king and threatens both 29 Q–R4 and 29 N–N8*ch*. The knight cannot be taken (28 ... K × N, 29 Q–R4*ch* leads to mate) and on KB6 it serves another important function – the protection of the White QP. This becomes important after:

28 ... Q–N2

The best try, threatening 29 ... R × P*ch*. But White has a spectacular

12th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 18–Jan. 4, 1959–60

	F	B	R	B	B	W	S	S	M	B	D	A	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	7	4	0	9–2
2. R. Byrne	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	5	6	0	8–3
3. Reshevsky	½	½	X	½	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	6	3	2	7½–3½
4. Benko	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	5	4	2	7–4
5. Bisguier	0	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	4	5	2	6½–4½
6. R. Weinstein	½	0	0	0	½	X	1	0	1	1	1	1	5	2	4	6–5
7. Seidman	0	½	1	0	½	0	X	½	1	0	1	1	4	3	4	5½–5½
8. Sherwin	½	½	0	½	0	1	½	X	½	0	½	1	2	6	3	5–6
9. Mednis	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	X	1	1	1	3	3	5	4½–6½
10. Bernstein	0	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	X	½	1	3	2	6	4–7
11. Denker	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	X	1	2	2	7	3–8
12. Ault	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0	0	11	0–11

defense which must be played to justify White's last move. The win was there after 29 P–N4!! because after 29 ... P × P*e.p.ch*, 30 P × P R × P White smothers the attack with 31 R–N4! Note that 31 ... R × R(5), 32 R × R leaves Black's queen en prise and 32 ... Q × P*ch* fails to 33 N × Q*ch*.

Mednis thinks he sees another way out.

29 N–N8*ch*? K–B1, 30 P–B3

This is what he had been counting on. White is two pawns up and appears to have silenced the QN file violence.

30 ... B–B8!

But this is what he overlooked (31 R × B R × P*ch*). The bishop adds the final fuel to the attack and there followed:

31 R–N2 R × P*ch*, 32 R × R B × R, 33 Q–B2 Q–N4!, 34 P–B6 Q–R4, 35 Q × B R × Q*ch* and Black won.

Fischer glided through the final rounds and won again by a full point.

1960–61: Youth to the Fore

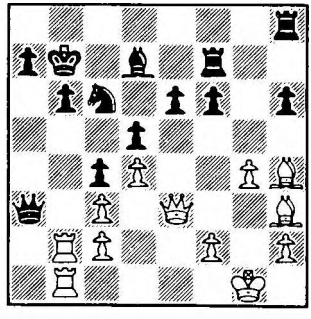
No one has ever been able to explain why chess talent should develop so haphazardly. In the 1930s and again in the 1950s there were large crops of talented new players in America, just as there was in the Soviet Union. But both countries went dry for most of the 1960s, producing no players of distinction until 1970. Other countries took up the slack. For example, Czechoslovakia, which had produced few players since World War II, suddenly found itself with four future grandmasters during the mid-1960s (Vlastimil Hort, Lubosh Kavalek, Jan Smeikal and Vlastimil Jansa).

The 1960–61 U.S. championship was the last year of the American youth movement in chess for a decade, but it was an impressive result nonetheless. Even the Evans-Bisguier-Byrne generation appeared to be out of date in light of the progress made by Lombardy, Raymond Weinstein, and Fischer. Lombardy, the eldest at 23, had been a psychology major at City College while emerging as a terror of student team championships and the world junior championship. At Leningrad in the

summer of 1960 he led the U.S. team to a surprise victory over the highly favored Soviet students headed by Boris Spassky. Weinstein, another member of the team, was then a 19-year-old Brooklyn College student who had shown how a steady diet of tough competition could bring out the best in a young player. From last place two championships before, he had risen to a plus score in 1959–60. He would reach the top three in 1960–61, and nearly qualify for the interzonal tournament of 1962. If there had never been a Fischer, Weinstein would have been the sensation of American chess in 1961.

But there was a Fischer, and he was maturing. In his fourth championship he wore a suit and tie to the board—no more sweaters, jeans and sneakers. He had in one sense his easiest championship to date, and in another, his hardest. It was easy because he scored nine points, or two more than his nearest rival. He defeated the second, third and fourth place finishers in the individual games with them. But he was in trouble more than once, and not just against the grandmasters. Almost certainly he was lost against Saidy, who was making his championship debut. Fischer was even taking cautious "grandmaster draws" again, including a 12-mover with the White pieces against Benko.

In the first round he obtained no edge at all against Weinstein, who was expected to be one of his easier points. Fischer got nothing out of the opening against the Winawer Variation of the French Defense, but the middle-game position was difficult to play for both sides:



Fischer–R. Weinstein, 1960
After 28 B × N

28 ... P–K4??

This seems to be just the kind of move that should improve Black's already promising position. The problem piece of the French, Black's QB, is now freed. But there is a tactical flaw. Instead, 28 ... P–KR4! might have posed more difficulty (29 P × P R × P and 30 ... R/2–R2).

29 P × P P × P, 30 R × R*ch*!

Ahh! A small surprise for Weinstein, who quickly became flustered. He cannot take the rook because of mate by 31 Q × P*ch* and 32 Q–N7.

30 ... K–R1, 31 R(6)–N5

Black's center is under intense pressure and he needs all his tactical awareness to keep it whole. White's bishops, out of play while Black had a pawn at K3, now come to life on N2 and N3.

31 ... B–K3, 32 B–N3 P–K5?

This tears it. Black had to play the ugly, but necessary 32 ... Q–Q3.

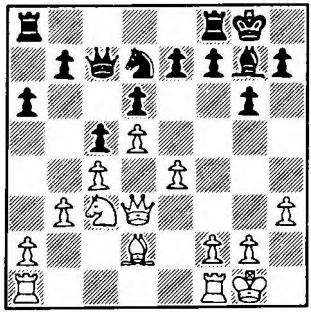
33 Q × RP!! Black resigns.

The queen is taboo because of 34 R–N8*ch* and mates, and 33 ... R–K1, 34 Q × B! only prolongs the game.

Weinstein came back strongly later on, beating Bisguier and Robert Byrne in time-pressure battles. Lombardy also racked up some good scalps, beating Byrne and Charles Kalme. The young stars stood safely behind Fischer through most of the event, but also just ahead of the older generation. Bisguier, having his best championship since 1954, had a chance to catch the two young contenders, and reach the Interzonal, on the eve of the last round. He needed only a draw to clinch a tie for third place. But the draw had to come from Fischer.

King's Indian Defense
***white* Bisguier, *black* Fischer**

1 P–Q4 N–KB3, 2 P–QB4 P–KN3, 3 N–QB3 B–N2, 4 N–B3 0–0, 5 B–B4 P–B4, 6 P–Q5 P–Q3, 7 P–K4 Q–R4, 8 B–Q3 B–N5, 9 0–0 QN–Q2, 10 P–KR3 B × N, 11 Q × B N–K4!, 12 Q–K2 N × B, 13 Q × N P–QR3, 14 B–Q2 N–Q2, 15 P–QN3 Q–B2



After 15 ... Q–B2

Bisguier–Fischer, 1961

13th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 18-Jan. 5, 1960–61

	F	L	W	B	R	S	K	B	B	B	S	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	7	4	0	9–2
2. Lombardy	0	X	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	5	4	2	7–4
3. R. Weinstein	0	1	X	1	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	4	5	2	6½–4½
4–6. Bisguier	0	½	0	X	½	½	1	1	0	1	1	½	4	4	3	6–5
4–6. Reshevsky	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	2	8	1	6–5
4–6. Sherwin	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	1	0	½	1	3	6	2	6–5
7. Kalme	½	0	1	0	½	½	X	1	½	0	½	½	2	6	3	5–6
8–11. Benko	½	½	½	0	½	0	0	X	½	1	0	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
8–11. Berliner	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	½	X	0	1	1	3	3	5	4½–6½
8–11. R. Byrne	½	0	0	0	½	1	1	0	1	X	0	½	3	3	5	4½–6½
8–11. Saidy	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	1	0	1	X	1	3	3	5	4½–6½
12. Seidman	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	X	0	5	6	2½–8½

Black has equalized due to his simplification of pieces and ability to get his queenside initiative going. Bisguier underestimates this initiative and prepares his own initiative, in the center, with P–B4, QR–K1 and P–K5. He assumes he will have time to meet 16 ... QR–N1 with 17 P–QR4.

16 P–B4 P–QN4!, 17 P × P Q–N3

The threat of ... P–B5*ch* gives Black the extra protection of his QN4 he needs to justify his 16th move. White can now visualize the enemy queenside advance picking up energy after 18 ... P × P followed by 19 ... P–N5 or ... QR–N1 and a later ... P–B5. Bisguier decides to sacrifice the exchange so as to eliminate the powerful Black bishop and stop the queenside pawns.

18 K–R2 P × P, 19 N × P!? B × R, 20 R × B KR–B1, 21 Q–B4 Q–R3!, 22 P–QR4 N–N3, 23 Q–B2

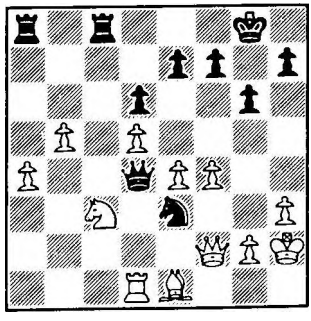
Black's advantage now lies in the superiority of his rooks. But they have no good files to work with, so Fischer finds an excellent way of centralizing his queen and activitating his other heavy pieces.

23 ... P–B5!, 24 P–QN4 P–B6!, 25 N × BP Q–B5

White had little choice but to permit this intrusion. Now he must attempt to plug up the holes at QN4, QB4, QR4, Q4 and Q3.

26 P–N5 Q–Q5, 27 B–K1 N–B5, 28 Q–B2 N–K6, 29 R–Q1

After 29 R–B1 Black's rooks show their force with 29 ... R–B5 and 30 ... R(1)–QB1.



After 29 R–Q1

Bisguier–Fischer, 1961

29 ... Q × N!

Fischer began and ended the tournament with queen sacrifices. Here he gets two rooks and a knight for the queen and the White pawns soon run out of steam:

30 B × Q N × R, 31 Q–Q4 N × B, 32 P–N6 R–B4!, 33 P–K5 R × RP, 34 P–N7!? R × Q,, 35 P–N8(Q)*ch* K–N2, 36 P × P P × P, 37 Q × P R(4) × P, 38 Q–B7 N–K7, 39 P–B5 R × P, 40 Q–R7 R(B)–Q4, 41 Q–R1 N–B5 and White resigns.

Reshevsky, now retired from accounting, was living on selling insurance and mutual funds. Entering his fifties, his chess career seemed on the decline, and this was his worst result to date. Would he ever be a contender again?

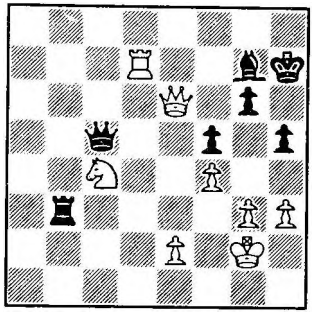
1961–62: Anyone Beats Anyone

The championship had grown in strength so much during the first four Fischer years that even without him, and even with the added loss of Reshevsky and several other stars, it still compared favorably in stature with the 1948, 1951 and 1954 events. In the winter of 1961–62 Fischer was preparing for another interzonal, the first step towards the 1963 world title match. If everything went well, he would also be headed for his second candidates tournament, set for later in 1962. Bisguier, replacing Lombardy who was preparing for a career in the priesthood, was also headed for the Stockholm Interzonal and was similarly unavailable for the 14th championship. As for Reshevsky, he appeared to have retired from chess following the collapse of his match with Fischer earlier in the year.

That left 12 more or less evenly matched opponents. "It's the kind of field where most anyone could beat most anyone else," Bernstein said, and he was almost right. The favorites were Evans and the most recent U.S. Open winners, Robert Byrne (winner in 1960) and Benko (1961). The weakening of the field also permitted invitations for players who had been infrequently active – Hearst, who hadn't played since 1954 because of school work; Kramer; and Donald Byrne, whose occasional absences from the championship could partly be explained by declining health.

As usual the standings were confused in the early rounds because of adjourned games. Only Mednis had a perfect score after the first day.

But Evans had adjourned in a winning position, and by the time the hanging games were cleared up he had a 3–0 lead, compared to 2–1 scores for Mednis and Seidman, the closest competitors. Evans was playing chess as he approached the age of 30 "for the spirit of competition," he said. "And sometimes because I run short of cash." But he drew with Mednis in the fourth round to lessen his lead and then almost threw away the title the following day.



R. Byrne–Evans, 1961
After 37 ... R × P

A pawn ahead, with the more active pieces and, most important, having the move, Byrne is winning. But Evans had a pet theory: "No matter how bad your position, if it's not totally lost, you will arrive at a point during the game where you will be presented with an opportunity to win or draw if you take advantage of it.

"I never give up in an inferior position," he added. "Most players do."

38 Q–B7??

Time trouble again burns Byrne. He saw the possibilities of perpetual check but assumed that the White king could just walk away to safety somewhere on the queenside.

38 ... R × P*ch*!

Surprisingly there is no win anymore. Black can chase the king back and forth across the board.

39 K × R Q–N8*ch*, 40 K–B3 Q–B8*ch*, 41 K–K3 Q × RP*ch*, 42 K–B2 Q–R5*ch*, 43 K–N2 Q–N5*ch*, 44 K–B1 Q × BP*ch*, 45 K–K1 Q–N6*ch*, 46 K–Q1 Q–N6*ch*!

Here they agreed to a draw. If the king gets to QN1 (47 K–B1 Q–B6*ch*, 48 K–N1) he gets checked back with 48 ... Q–R8*ch* and 49 ... Q–B6*ch*.

But White could have won from the diagram with a fine resource—38 N–K5 so that 38 ... R × P*ch*, 39 K × R Q–N8*ch* could be met by 40 K–B3 Q–B8*ch*, 41 K–K3 Q × RP*ch*, 42 N–B3! Or 39 ... Q–K6*ch*!, 40 N–B3!! Q × Q, 41 N–N5*ch*.

"I'm hard to shake once off to a good start," Evans said, "but basically uninterested, lacking the necessary killer instinct." By that, he meant the "Fischer instinct." Still, he certainly seemed to have something, interest or instinct, as he led 5–1, just ahead of Sherwin (4½–2½) and Robert Byrne and Seidman (5–3). Mednis was also doing well, his best result—but Raymond Weinstein, third place winner the previous year, was in last place. And Benko ("I always lose once on time") had forfeited to Bernstein and was stalled with only an even score.

Evans, however, was playing exacting chess. With obvious relish he showed off his game with Hearst, taking time to savor the revenge of 1954. Another year, another Sicilian, but a very different game.

Sicilian Defense
white Hearst, *black* Evans

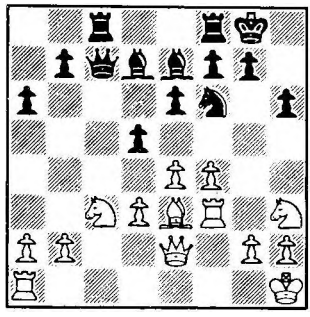
1 P–K4 P–QB4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 N × P P–K3, 5 N–QB3 Q–B2, 6 B–K3 P–QR3, 7 B–Q3 N–B3, 8 0–0 B–K2, 9 K–R1 P–Q3, 10 P–B4 B–Q2, 11 Q–K2 R–QB1

Both sides have fulfilled their assigned roles of this opening: White prepares for some sort of action, as yet undefined, on the kingside or in the center; Black is clearly intent on having enough counterplay on the queenside to meet all contingencies. White needs one more preparatory move, P–QR3, and then he will be ready to attack. For example, 12 P–QR3 0–0, 13 R–B3 and 14 R–N3.

12 N–B3!? 0–0, 13 N–N5? P–R3, 14 N–R3

Hearst's idea was to encourage ... P–KR3—just as he had done successfully in 1954. Here he hoped to open up the N file with P–KN4–5 or attack KN7 with R–B3–N3. But the loss of time permits a favorable exchange of minor pieces for Black that 12 P–QR3 would have stopped.

15 ... N–QN5!, 15 R–B3 N × B, 16 P × N P–Q4!



After 16 ... P–Q4

Hearst–Evans, 1961

Black could also have met the threats on the kingside with 16 ... KR–Q1, 17 R–N3 K–B1!, as Evans pointed out. But the text is more dynamic. White must either accept an exchange of center pawns or play 17 P–K5!, which would permit 17 ... N–K1, 18 R–N3 B–R5 with at least a draw.

17 R–N3? P × P, 18 P × P Q–B5!

Now the endgame is very nice for Black and, while that in itself is not decisive, the *threat* to trade down to an endgame permits Evans' pieces to take over three quarters of the board in the next few moves. The rest of the game is fairly easy for a grandmaster:

19 Q–B3 B–B3!, 20 N–B2 KR–Q1, 21 R–K1 K–B1!, 22 B–B1 P–QN4, 23 P–N3 Q–B4, 24 B–N2 Q–R4!, 25 P–QR3 Q × Q, 26 R × Q R–Q7, 27 B–B1 R–B7, 28 K–N1 B–B4, 29 N–N1 B × KP! and White resigns.

After ten rounds it was Evans at 7–3, Byrne a half point back and the surprising Seidman only a point behind. Moreover, Seidman had White against Evans in the final round while Byrne met Weinstein, who, though out of form, was still tough. All certainty of an Evans championship was put in doubt when the 1951 titleholder got a bad game in another Najdorf Sicilian as Black (1 P–K4 P–QB4, 2 N–KB3 P–Q3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N–KB3, 5 N–QB3 P–QR3, 6 B–KN5 QN–Q2, 7 B–K2 P–N4, 8 P–QR4! P–N5, 9 N–Q5! B–N2, 10 B × N N × B, 11 N × N*ch* KP × N, 12 0–0 P–N3, 13 Q–Q2! B–N2, 14 Q × P) while Byrne was winning a pawn from Weinstein. Both games went to adjournment and everything was on hold.

14th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 17–Jan. 4, 1961–62

	E	B	B	M	S	S	H	B	W	T	K	B	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Evans	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	4	7	0	7½–3½
2. R. Byrne	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	3	8	0	7–4
3–6. Benko	½	½	X	1	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	4	5	2	6½–4½
3–6. Mednis	½	½	0	X	1	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	4	5	2	6½–4½
3–6. Seidman	½	½	1	0	X	0	1	1	1	0	1	½	5	3	3	6½–4½
3–6. Sherwin	½	0	0	½	1	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	4	5	2	6½–4½
7. Hearst	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	2	7	2	5½–5½
8. D. Byrne	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	1	2	6	3	5–6
9. R. Weinstein	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	X	1	0	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
10. Turner	0	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	0	X	½	½	1	6	4	4–7
11. Kramer	0	0	0	1	0	0	½	½	1	½	X	0	2	3	6	3½–7½
12. Bernstein	0	0	1	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	1	X	2	2	7	3–8

But Evans' survival theory paid off again and he created enough counterplay to force Seidman to accept a draw. Byrne could do nothing with his extra pawn after 61 moves and had to postpone his championship bid for a decade. Yet despite one of the more exciting events in recent memory, many of the spectators were overheard to wonder: By how many points would Fischer have won had he played *this* time?

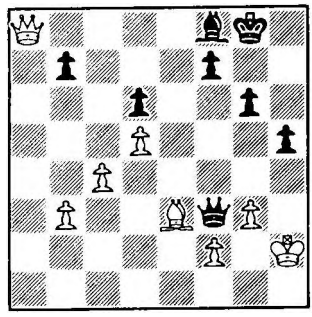
1962–63: Upsets and a Near-Miss

Fischer had a legitimate excuse for passing up the 15th championship. He had been preparing for the Curaçao candidates tournament, the last of the series to be held before match play replaced tournaments in the final elimination step of the world championship. Nevertheless, the American Chess Foundation and USCF feared that money, or the lack of it, was undermining their event. After all, the first prize in the 14th championship was $1,000, compared with $700 for third prize in the Sixth American Chess Congress more than 70 years before. The foundation and federation boosted the top prize to $2000 for the 15th championship, which had the added attraction of being another zonal event. To no one's surprise, Fischer, Reshevsky and Bisguier returned to the event.

But this was a confusing tournament, the tournament of upsets. In the first round Evans, the defending champion, was completely outplayed by the man most people figured to finish last, St. Louis businessman Robert Steinmeyer. A former junior star, Steinmeyer took the championship casually. He had turned down an invitation the previous year, and even when he accepted for the 1962–63 event he explained his attitude: "I'm obviously not going to come in the first three places, so I may as well have fun." He did against Evans, winning in 51 moves.

The second surprise came in an up-and-down contest between another newcomer, William Addison of San Francisco, and Reshevsky. Three years later—after beating him in the 17th championship—Reshevsky would grandly comment that Addison had "established himself as one of the leading American masters" as a result of Addison's tied-for-fourth-place finish. Actually, Addison more than established himself in December 1962–January 1963 at the Henry Hudson Hotel, when he tied for third place in his first championship.

It's easy to see how Reshevsky had forgotten that earlier tournament. It began with:



Addison–Reshevsky, 1962
After 39 ... Q × B

This is the last move before time control. White has been trying to set up a mate with B–R6 for several moves, but Black always countered the threat in time. Now, for example, 40 B–R6? leads to 40 ... Q × BP*ch*, 41 K–R3 Q–B8*ch* with a draw, because 42 K–R4?? Q–R8*ch*, 43 K–N5 Q–B8*ch*! actually loses for White.

40 K–N1!

Everyone in the room but one saw what was threatened now. Or, rather, Reshevsky saw the threat but miscalculated a two-move variation.

40 ... P–R5??, 41 B–R6 Black resigns.

Likely he had counted on 41 ... Q–Q8*ch* followed by a pawn check. But White ends the checks with 42 K–N2 P–R6*ch*, 43 K–R2! or 42 K–R2 P × P*ch*, 43 K–N2!

The most surprising of all was the loss by the tournament's third favorite. Fischer plays about 50 per cent stronger with White than with Black, Evans had said of him. "It is hard to remember when he last lost with White." Well, it did happen from time to time, and, after two adjournments, it happened on December 18th in a long, slowly stagnating French Defense against Mednis. What had turned out to be no advantage in the opening and only mixed chances in the middlegame, turned out to be an elusive initiative in the endgame that evaporated completely in the second session of play. Mednis took the upper hand for the first time in the game on move 49 and eventually created a bind with the aid of a passed QRP. Fischer had to resign on move 73, his first loss in four championships, after essentially beating himself.

By the time that loss was registered, Fischer had gotten his point back against Berliner, his victim in the second round. But he was still a half point behind Bisguier, who for once was going to play a whole tour-

nament consistently. Bisguier's recurring problem in the years since 1954 was putting together a string of victories. He might win a few games each year and then, Evans said, go into a slump. "When he loses a game or two he feels it incumbent to prove he's out of form and therefore he loses three or four games to go along with it." Yet even in a field ostensibly dominated by Fischer, Bisguier was the "greatest natural player" in the event, Evans said.

In 1962 Bisguier had come up with a new weapon, the latest in a seemingly never-ending series, against the Ruy Lopez. His secret turned out to be the ancient Berlin Defense, leading to jokes about Bisguier's having as much trouble defending Berlin as President Kennedy. But Bisguier got the last laugh:

Ruy Lopez
white **Sherwin,** ***black*** **Bisguier**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 B-N5 N-B3, 4 0-0 N × P, 5 R-K1?! N-Q3, 6 N × P B-K2, 7 B-Q3

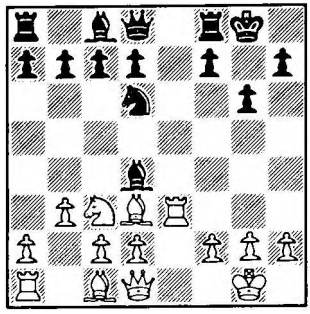
Sherwin, then practicing law, was forced to work during the day and play at night and was agonizing through his worst championship. Unprepared in many of his opponents' pet variations and prone to long "thinks" anyway, he was frequently in time trouble by the 20th move. Here he chooses a somewhat innocuous line that leads to sterile chances once Black has avoided any sacrificial attacks on KR7. But no better was 7 B-B1 or 7 N × N QP × N, 8 B-B1.

7 ... 0-0, 8 N-QB3 N × N, 9 R × N B-B3, 10 R-K3 P-N3

With his last two moves Bisguier fianchettoes his bishop and meets the threat of 11 B × RP*ch* K × B, 12 R-R3*ch* K-N1, 13 Q-R5. This line is actually quite old and had been considered slightly better for White since the last century. Bisguier has an improvement.

11 P-QN3 B-Q5!

In a world championship game in 1886 Johannes Zukertort played 11 ... R-K1?!, 12 Q-B3 B-N4? against Wilhelm Steinitz and got the worst of it. Bisguier's move forces the enemy back in the center and permits himself to develop his queenside.



After 11 ... B-Q5

Sherwin-Bisguier, 1962

12 R-K2 P-N3, 13 B-R3 P-QB4, 14 P-QN4?

White needs to get his queen into play and reorganize his pieces. Opening the QN file boomerangs quickly.

14 ... B-QN2, 15 P × P P × P, 16 R-N1 R-N1, 17 N-K4?

With a progressively worsening game and already in time pressure, Sherwin blunders. Surprisingly, Black now has a forced win.

17 ... B × N, 18 R × R Q × R, 19 B × B R-K1

He picks up material quickly after 20 B-Q3 R × R, 21 B × R N-K5! or 20 Q × R Q-N8*ch* after which good technique is all that is necessary to score the point. But that isn't necessary after ...

20 P-Q3? N-N4! and White resigns.

Bisguier's lead was endangered as long as Fischer was in the tournament. But he followed up with his win over Sherwin by beating Mednis and Nicolas Rossolimo, the French émigré grandmaster who had managed to draw with Fischer. That meant Bisguier had two points from players who had given Bobby only half a point.

Fischer picked up some ground by crushing Reshevsky (with a paralyzing endgame gem) and Berliner, while Bisguier could only draw with them. And so, going into the final round it was Fischer and Bisguier tied at 7 points. Both were certain to qualify for the Interzonal, with the third spot up for grabs among four players – Addison, Byrne, Evans and Reshevsky. Fischer, of course, was not content to share first prize, even though this was the first time he entered the last round tied for the lead. He had three factors on his side in the final $2000 showdown: He was

White and he knew exactly what to expect in the opening. And there was also what Evans called "that silly jinx" whenever Bisguier met Fischer.

Ruy Lopez
***white* Fischer, *black* Bisguier**

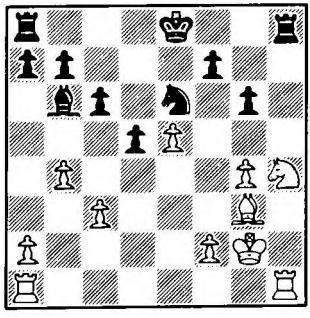
1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–QB3, 3 B–N5 N–B3, 4 0–0 N × P, 5 P–Q4! N–Q3, 6 B × N QP × B, 7 P × P N–B4, 8 Q × Q*ch* K × Q, 9 N–B3 K–K1

Despite appearances—the bad pawns and lack of king protection and development—the position is virtually even. Bisguier, who reveled in such double-edged endgames, knew that his two good bishops usually were active enough to correct his pawn irregularities before White could get his rooks into play. Black equalizes in the next half dozen moves, but after the game Bisguier adopted 9 ... P–KR3! as a means of playing the position to win.

10 N–K2! B–K3, 11 N–B4 B–Q4!, 12 N × B P × N, 13 P–KN4 N–K2, 14 B–B4 P–QB3, 15 KR–K1 N–N3, 16 B–N3 B–B4, 17 P–B3 N–B1

White's king is not particularly better off than Black's and his kingside majority of pawns is no closer to creating a queen than Black's queenside mass. Fischer needs to play K–N2 and a knight move before he can play P–KB4–5 and lay claim to an edge.

18 P–N4 B–N3, 19 K–N2! N–K3, 20 N–R4 P–KR4!, 21 P–KR3 P × P, 22 P × P P–N3, 23 R–R1



After 23 R–R1

Fischer–Bisguier, 1963

By lining up his rook against Black's, White creates tactical tricks. Bisguier could see that 24 N × P was *not* a threat just yet because

15th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 16–Jan. 3, 1962–63

	F	B	A	E	R	B	B	M	B	R	S	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	1	1	½	1	½	1	0	½	½	1	1	6	4	1	8–3
2. Bisguier	0	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	4	6	1	7–4
3–5. Addison	0	0	X	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	4	5	2	6½–4½
3–5. Evans	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	½	0	1	3	7	1	6½–4½
3–5. Reshevsky	0	½	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	4	5	2	6½–4½
6. R. Byrne	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	10	0	6–5
7–8. Berliner	0	½	0	0	0	½	X	1	½	½	1	1	3	4	4	5–6
7–8. Mednis	1	0	0	½	0	½	0	X	½	1	½	1	3	4	4	5–6
9–10. Benko	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	X	0	1	½	1	7	3	4½–6½
9–10. Rossolimo	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	X	½	½	1	7	3	4½–6½
11. Steinmeyer	0	½	0	1	0	½	0	½	0	½	X	1	2	4	5	4–7
12. Sherwin	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	C	0	5	6	2½–8½

24 ... R × R, 25 R × R P × N, 26 R–R8*ch* N–B1 lets him escape (27 P–K6 P × P, 28 B–Q6 K–B2!).

But with White building up on the kingside Bisguier decides against the possibilities for counterplay and perhaps even an advantage on the queenside with ... P–QR4. He tries to force matters. (Best, by the way, was 23 ... K–Q2, connecting the Black rooks. Black can always meet 24 P–KB4 or a later P–KB4 with ... P–N4!, crippling the enemy pawn mass.)

23 ... B–Q1??, 24 N–B5! R × R, 25 N–Q6*ch*

This was the trick Black missed. Suddenly Bisguier's king is pinned to the first rank and the White pawns begin to march.

25 ... K–B1, 26 R × R P–QN4, 27 P–KB4 K–N1, 28 P–B5 N–B1, 29 P–K6!

Now it is mate with B–K5 that Black must worry about. His game collapsed quickly:

29 ... P–B3, 30 N–B7 B–K2, 31 B–B4 P–N4, 32 B–Q6 R–K1, 33 B × B R × B, 34 N–Q8 R–K1, 35 N × P N × P, 36 P × N R × P, 37 N × P and Black resigns. Fischer's closest call.

Elsewhere in the last round Byrne could only draw with Mednis while Reshevsky, after two adjournments, ground down Benko. Thus, Sammy sneaked into a three-way tie for the last interzonal spot and the tie was resolved in a playoff victory for the semiretired insurance salesman a few months later.

1963–64: That's Incredible

Fischer's one flaw, Evans said, was overconfidence. It "sometimes causes him to forget his opponents are also capable of finding good moves." For this reason the 15th championship had a positive, chastening effect on the 20-year-old winner. He approached the next affair very seriously: He would take no prisoners.

The tournament was again very strong, with only Lombardy among the nation's finest to be missing. The new rating list placed Fischer clearly at the top with 2685 points followed by Reshevsky at 2611, Lombardy at 2575, Benko at 2566, Evans at 2559 and Robert Byrne at 2512. The

points indicated Fischer should win a championship comfortably if he worked at it. But there was also the possibility of another surprise loss to a player like Mednis.

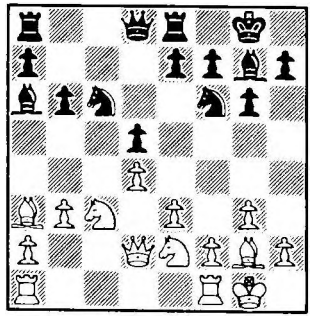
Fischer came to the Henry Hudson Hotel for the 16th championship as if seeking redemption for the bad chess of 1962. He had been studying the game for five or six hours a day according to friends and was well armed in every opening. In fact, he had a whole new arsenal of theoretical weapons. In the first round he brought out the Bishop's Gambit, a remnant of the 19th century, against an astonished Evans. (Fischer had written "A Bust to the King's Gambit" for Evans' magazine, *American Chess Quarterly*, the previous year.) Evans thought he was doing well – in fact, believed he had the advantage as late as move 31. But Evans resigned before move 36.

Fischer also avenged himself early against Mednis. Yet he wanted to do more than just win the tournament. He wanted to notch up some personal records. Fischer had never beaten Evans or Robert Byrne – but they fell in rounds 2 and 3. The latter game was played in a private room and this arrangement provided one of the more dramatic U.S. championship scenes.

Spectators followed the moves as they were relayed by telephone and evaluated in an analysis room by Rossolimo and Sherwin, who were sitting this championship out. The audience was treated to this:

King's Indian Defense
***white* R. Byrne, *black* Fischer**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-KN3, 3 P-KN3 P-B3, 4 B-N2 P-Q4!, 5 P×P P×P, 6 N-QB3 B-N2, 7 P-K3 0-0, 8 KN-K2 N-B3, 9 0-0 P-N3, 10 P-N3 B-QR3, 11 B-QR3 R-K1, 12 Q-Q2



After 12 Q-Q2

R. Byrne–Fischer, 1963

Byrne "has a penchant for safe, closed positions which yield to strategical concepts," Evans said before the tournament. "His chess is strong and powerful, and he should be rated as a dark horse to win."

But Byrne's reliance on caution here is based on a simple plan. He will build up heavy pieces on the QB file. If Black does the same White will have the time to engineer some sort of breakthrough in the center. Of course, if Black tries a breakthrough, such as with ... P–K4, he will be left with a horribly weak QP after QP × P.

Of course.

12 ... P–K4!, 13 P × P N × P, 14 KR–Q1

Fischer later waged an analytical war with the Russians over the merits of 14 QR–Q1, which Yuri Averbakh said favored White and which Fischer said didn't. But Byrne's move is much more natural. He will simply kill the QP with 15 N–B4, it seems.

14 ... N–Q6, 15 Q–B2 N × P!

Without this move Black must accept an inferior position—perhaps a lost one—by retreating. The absence of a rook defending KB2 made this possible, but exactly what Fischer had in mind was not clear to anyone but him. Was he really going to give up two minor pieces for a rook, the masters in the analysis room downstairs wanted to know?

16 K × N N–N5*ch*

"I'm sure Tal will say I shoulda played 16 ... R × P but I don't believe it," Fischer joked after the game.

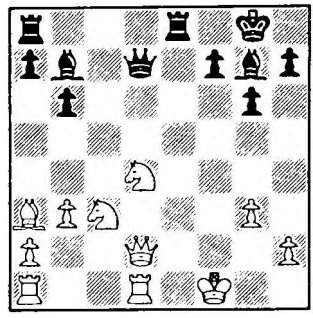
17 K–N1 N × KP, 18 Q–Q2 N × B(!?!)

Absolutely incomprehensible, Rossolimo was saying downstairs. Bobby had to take the rook to keep a semblance of material equality. What was going on? Maybe the wrong move was telephoned downstairs.

19 K × N P–Q5!, 20 N × P B–N2*ch*

It's a pretty diagonal and Black's bishops are fearsome (21 K–N1 B × N*ch*, 22 Q × B R–K8*ch*, 23 K–B2 Q × Q*ch* and 25 ... R × R wins). But what about 21 K–B1 (21 ... B × N, 21 Q × B R–K8*ch*, 22 K × R!)?

21 K–B1 Q–Q2



After 21 ... Q–Q2

R. Byrne–Fischer, 1963

"I don't understand this at all," Rossolimo was saying with some exasperation. The moves had been checked and double-checked by telephone. But "Fischer has nothing at all for his piece," he said.

Sherwin said it wasn't all that clear, but he wasn't sure. And where was the next move? Byrne must have been thinking quite a while, and yet nothing had come down from upstairs. Then ...

White resigns.

Rossolimo was in shock until Byrne came down to show everyone the key lines: To meet the threat of 22 ... Q–R6*ch*, 23 K–N1 B × N*ch*, 24 Q × B Q–N7 *mate*, White could play either 22 N(4)–N5 Q–R6*ch*, 23 K–N1 (and lose to 23 ... B–KR3!, 24 Q–KB2 B–K6!) or, the prettier way, 22 Q–KB2 Q–R6*ch*, 23 K–N1, which loses spectacularly to 23 ... R–K8*ch*!! – the move Rossolimo had missed. After 24 R × R B × N there is nothing to do about mate on KN7.

This was only the third round but by the fifth it was clear Fischer was winning the event easily. He was not only winning every game but showed no difficulty in doing it. In every game he was ahead on time – often an hour ahead. What most observers didn't know was that Fischer was going for something more than points, or prize money or the Frank Marshall trophy.

He was seeking a record. After Reshevsky blundered in Round 5, Bobby trapped Steinmeyer's knight on the 17th move and forced his resignation. The day after Christmas saw the champion spring a new surprise – defending the Ruy Lopez and with a new wrinkle (3 ... P–QR3, 4 B–R4 P–QN4 and 5 ... N–R4). Soon he had the edge against Addison and it was 7–0.

With four rounds to go it was becoming clear: Fischer was heading for an unheard of perfect 11–0 score. A shut-out.

The tournament audiences were now filling up the Henry Hudson

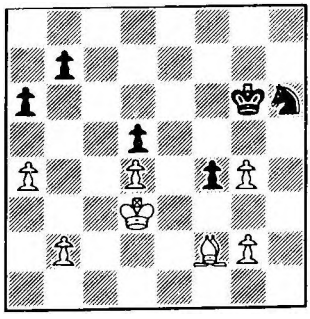
ballroom almost every round and all eyes were on the only board that mattered. Evans had turned in a spectacular draw against Reshevsky when he sacrificed queen and rook to set up a stalemate. (Evans: "When White made his next move Reshevsky's face changed color. He smiled with wry bitterness and mumbled one word to himself—'Stupid.'") It was a repeat of the Pilnick game from 1942 – but it was lost in the shuffle. Fischer was the story of the day.

The champion beat Raymond Weinstein on time (but in a winning position) and he stood at 8–0. The next day it was Fischer as Black over Donald Byrne in a grinding Sicilian, 9–0. Then, in perhaps his best game of the tournament, he won from Benko. The Hungarian émigré, now living in New Jersey and earning a healthy capitalist income from Swiss System tournaments, had previously beaten Bobby three times, more than anyone in the event except Reshevsky. But this time Fischer was simply overwhelming.

The champion resisted the temptation to sacrifice his queen on move 13 because, as he explained later, there was only one brilliancy prize in the tournament and he had already clinched it for the Robert Byrne game. Simply good moves made his score 10–0.

The final game was a difficult, positional struggle with little difference in the placement of Bobby's pieces as Black and Tony Saidy's as White. Early in the game, Evans spotted Saidy away from the board and told him, "Good. Show him we're not all children." Saidy, like Evans, was well aware of Fischer's prediction of a few day's earlier—that he would sweep the tournament—and he hoped to be the spoiler, the batter who breaks up a no-hitter with a scratch single in the bottom of the ninth inning.

After 43 moves he had lost the initiative but still had solid drawing chances as he faced the responsibility of sealing a move.



Saidy–Fischer, 1964
After 43 ... N–R3

White temporarily has an extra pawn but he will lose it back, leaving him

16th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 15–Jan. 3, 1963–64

	F	E	B	S	R	B	W	B	A	M	S	B	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	0	0	11–0
2. Evans	0	X	1	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	6	3	2	7½–3½
3. Benko	0	0	X	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	5	4	2	7–4
4–5. Saidy	0	½	0	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	5	3	3	6½–4½
4–5. Reshevsky	0	½	½	1	X	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	4	5	2	6½–4½
6. R. Byrne	0	½	0	½	½	X	0	½	1	1	1	½	3	5	3	5½–5½
7. R. Weinstein	0	1	0	0	1	1	X	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	6	5–6
8. Bisguier	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	X	1	0	½	1	3	3	5	4½–6½
9–10. Addison	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	X	½	½	1	2	3	6	3½–7½
9–10. Mednis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	½	X	½	½	2	3	6	3½–7½
11. Steinmeyer	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	0	6	5	3–8
12. D. Byrne	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	X	0	5	6	2½–8½

with the very slight inferiority of having a bishop obstructed by his own pawn on Q4.

Nothing much had happened in the previous 20 moves when the last exchange of pieces occured. Now Saidy just had to prevent an enemy king invasion at K5 or KN5.

44 B–K1?

Saidy thought for 45 minutes, considering this and a variety of other defenses, such as 44 K–K2 N × P, 45 B–N1. This alternative makes a poor impression since the bishop would appear to be better placed on the K1–KR4 diagonal. But it is needed to promote P–KN3, e.g., 44 K–K2 N × P, 45 B–N1! K–B4, 46 K–B3 (intending to eliminate the pawn with P–KN3) N–B3, 47 B–R2! (47 P–KN3? P × P, 48 K × P K–K5!) and White draws.

44 ... N × P

Fischer opened the sealed move envelope and saw 44 B–K1? A smile flickered across his face as he tasted the all-time record.

45 B–Q2

Now if White tries to blockade with his king on KB3 he can be driven off, e.g. 45 K–K2 K–B4, 46 K–B3 N–R7*ch*.

45 ... K–B4, 46 B–K1 N–B3

And now 47 P–KN3 allows 47 ... P–B6! Fischer finishes off with some fancy knightwork.

47 B–R4 N–K5, 48 B–K1 K–N5, 49 K–K2 N–N6*ch*!

The king-and-pawn ending was lost (50 B × N K × B, 51 K–B1 P–B6!) so there followed:

50 K–Q3 N–B4!, 51 B–B2 N–R5, 52 P–R5 N × P, 53 K–B3 K–B6, 54 B–N1 K–K7, 55 B–R2 P–B6, 56 B–N3 N–K6! and White resigns.

1965: Letdown

There was no championship in December 1964 and that meant the first break in the annual series that had begun with the ACF's initiative seven years before. But it would have been hard to top the 16th championship and there would be no way to approach it, since Fischer was nowhere to be found. He had bypassed the 1964 interzonal tournament in a dispute over world championship procedures and had dropped from sight of the chess world for all of 1964 and much of 1965. A championship without Bobby—after the last one—would have been an anticlimax.

When he returned, for his seventh championship, Fischer's absence from the game was detectable. Not obvious, just detectable. His lack of sharpness, of tactical acuity, didn't come to general attention until well into the event, well after his usual gangbusters start. Bobby broke his consecutive win streak by drawing with Addison in the first round. The next day he beat Duncan Suttles, a San Francisco–born master who was planning to settle in Canada. Suttles opened every game with Black by fianchettoing his king bishop (1 ... P–KN3) and Fischer was well prepared for him, establishing a queenside bind fairly early. Fischer's wins over Evans and Benko in the next two rounds were vintage Bobby and he made it four in a row by topping Bernard Zuckerman, another Brooklyn protégé of his, and Saidy.

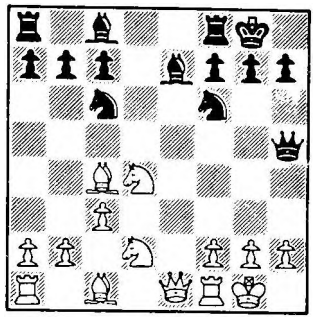
But then came two astonishing losses, one right after another. His simple oversight against Robert Byrne left spectators a bit stunned. Surely there must be something there I'm missing, they each seemed to say. It can't be that simple—it must be like the last Byrne game ...

French Defense
***white* Fischer, *black* R. Byrne**

1 P–K4 P–K3, 2 P–Q4 P–Q4, 3 N–Q2 N–QB3, 4 P–QB3?! P–K4!, 5 KP × P Q × P, 6 KN–B3 P × P, 7 B–B4 Q–KR4, 8 0–0 N–B3

Fischer's offbeat handling of the opening—now that Black has avoided 8 ... P × P?, 9 N–K4—promises him little. Byrne could have played the usual move, 8 ... B–K3 followed by queenside castling, but he adopts a straightforward plan of development and this seems to trigger a misfire of Bobby's imagination.

9 Q–K1*ch*?! B–K2, 10 N × P 0–0



After 10 ... 0–0

Fischer–R. Byrne, 1965

Now Fischer *must* have seen that 11 N × N *does not* win a piece because Black threatens mate with 11 ... B–Q3 before recapturing on QB3 (11 N × N B–Q3, 12 N–K7*ch* K–R1!, 13 P–KN3 R–K1).

11 B–K2 B–KN5, 12 N × N??

Then how could FIscher have missed Byrne's move here?

12 ... B–Q3!, 13 P–KR3 B × B, 14 N–Q4 B × R and Black won in 36 moves.

This was only the second game Fischer had ever lost in a championship and fans were saying it would be some time before they would see another upset. It turned out that they only had to wait one day because Reshevsky was out for revenge. In the "11–0" year Fischer had swindled the old master in a complex position in which Reshevsky briefly held an extra pawn. As they began this year's game the two men were cordial, for the first time since their aborted match four years before. But then Reshevsky sat down and rolled Fischer off the board, winning his queen for a rook and then demonstrating his usual endgame accuracy to win in 61 moves.

The "myth of his invincibility has been shattered," Reshevsky crowed afterwards. "It can be safely predicted that future U.S. championships will be even closer." But this one was still Fischer's tournament. He pulled out of his losing streak to win a nice game from Rossolimo and then in the clinching round, an easy crush of Dr. Karl Burger, a medical doctor on holiday. The finish of the tournament was brightened only by the battle for second place and the sparkling game it produced.

Byrne needed a last round win to tie with Reshevsky and had to get it from Evans. But he had prepared an opening surprise in the Najdorf

Variation of the Sicilian — probably for Fischer, but it worked even better against Fischer's good friend:

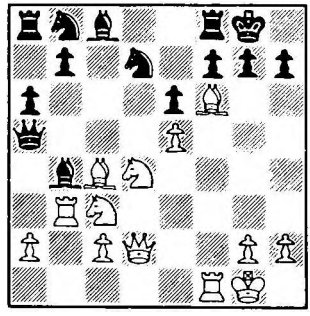
Sicilian Defense
white R. Byrne, *black* Evans

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N-KB3, 5 N-QB3 P-QR3, 6 B-N5 P-K3, 7 P-B4 Q-N3, 8 Q-Q2 Q × P, 9 R-QN1 Q-R6, 10 P-K5 P × P, 11 P × P KN-Q2, 12 B-QB4

This line had once terrorized grandmaster chess because of 12 ... B-K2, 13 B × KP! with a powerful attack. That was discovered in 1957, but Fischer refuted it five years later in a game that went 13 ... 0-0, 14 0-0 B × B, 15 Q × B P-R3, 16 Q-R4 Q × N! His opponent in that game forfeited on time after taking two and a half hours for 28 moves. Fischer took less than seven minutes.

Later improvements for White led Evans to try something new here:

12 ... B-N5!?, 13 R-N3 Q-R4, 14 0-0 0-0, 15 B-B6!



After 15 B-B6

R. Byrne–Evans, 1965

But Byrne had prepared this surprise antidote and it works perfectly against a stylistic materialist like Evans. In the next Championship, however, Byrne trusted his analysis too much. Bernard Zuckerman met the threat of 16 R × B Q × R, 17 Q-N5 P-KN3, 18 Q-R6 by the simple 15 ... N × B!, 16 P × N R-Q1 with good chances for Black. Zuckerman eventually won.

15 ... P × B?, 16 Q-R6 Q × KP

How does White — having ripped open the Black king position — shift his power from the queenside to the kingside?

17 N-B5!! P × N, 18 N-K4!

The threat is R-N3*ch* or R-R3: White's attack remains potent even if Black gives up queen for rook. We are still in Byrne's home analysis.

18 ... B-Q7, 19 N × B Q-Q5*ch*, 20 K-R1 N-K4, 21 R-N3*ch* N-N5

Evans' desperate lunge of pieces in front of his king is almost as ingenious as Byrne's. But here he had no answer to simple moves:

22 P-KR3 Q-K4, 23 R-B4! Q-K8*ch*, 24 N-B1!

Faced with threats of P × N, B-Q3 and R × N*ch* Evans played

24 ... Q × R, 25 R × N*ch*! Q × R, 26 P × Q N-Q2, 27 N-N3 K-R1 but gave up shortly after **28 B-Q3 R-KN1, 29 B × BP R-N3, 30 B × R**. A truly spectacular game.

Reshevsky's prediction about closer championships may have seemed a bit optimistic, but it seemed at least there would be a more aggressive and dangerous Robert Byrne in the future.

1966: A Grand Farewell

The losses to Mednis in 1963 and the double loss late in the 1965 championship had troubled Fischer. After the first setback the idea began to form in his mind that the tournaments he had dominated were too chancy. One bad game and he could lose his title. Or as he put it, "Something [is] really wrong if a fellow couldn't lose a game in a U.S. championship without practically being eliminated."

So, in the fall of 1966 Bobby laid down the law: The championship would have to be enlarged. Either it would be a double-round event, with everyone playing everyone else twice, or it would be lengthened by adding another eight or so players. Then it would be a fair fight, he said. Like the Soviet championship.

The irony of Fischer, who had fought Russian organizational ideas for the world championship, suddenly adopting their national championship as a model for America was not lost on U.S. officials. Nor could they understand how a man who had won 53 games out of 79 played in the previous seven championships — for a score of 82% — could suddenly be stricken by such doubts about his own ability. They expected some elaboration of his position but none came in the months just before the

17th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 12–31, 1965

	F	B	R	A	Z	R	B	E	S	B	B	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	0	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	1	2	8½–2½
2–3. R. Byrne	1	X	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	½	1	5	5	1	7½–3½
2–3. Reshevsky	1	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	5	5	1	7½–3½
4–5. Addison	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	4	5	2	6½–4½
4–5. Zuckerman	0	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	3	7	1	6½–4½
6. Rossolimo	0	0	½	½	½	X	1	1	0	1	1	½	4	4	3	6–5
7–9. Benko	0	1	½	½	0	0	X	½	0	½	1	1	3	4	4	5–6
7–9. Evans	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	X	1	1	1	1	4	2	5	5–6
7–9. Saidy	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	X	½	1	½	4	2	5	5–6
10–11. Bisguier	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	X	½	½	0	6	5	3–8
10–11. Burger	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	X	1	1	4	6	3–8
12. Suttles	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	X	1	3	7	2½–8½

deadline for invitations to be accepted. Then, in a long distance telephone call from Mexico City to the USCF office in New York, Bobby spelled out his specific terms. He'd accept a 16-round championship for 1966, but nothing less. Otherwise, he wouldn't play.

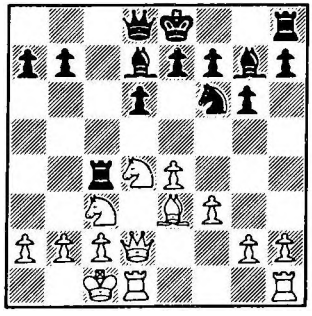
This is where the diplomacy and generosity of the Foundation proved instrumental. Maurice Kasper, who had been a father figure to many of the young American grandmasters, offered Bobby two things: (a) a promise to work towards a longer tournament next year – there just wasn't enough time this year, he said – and (b) an extra $500 for showing up this time. Fischer relented and arrived from Mexico just a few days before the first round.

His chess, at least in the previous championship, had no longer seemed overwhelming and the appearance continued into his eighth event. In the very first round he was lost against Benko, and he later had difficult positions against several players whom he had once bowled over so easily. In other words, Fischer was merely good enough to win the championship by two points.

As in some previous years, there was a rival to stay with him through the early rounds. This time it was Evans who also won his first three games. But eventually the 23-year-old champion began to build a lead, beating players that Evans could only draw with and, in the case of Donald Byrne, that Evans could lose to. Against Zuckerman, then the leading U.S. expert (after Fischer) on the openings, Bobby decided the game by the 18th move:

Sicilian Defense
***white* Fischer, *black* Zuckerman**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P P-KN3, 5 N-QB3 B-N2, 6 B-K3 N-B3, 7 B-QB4 P-Q3, 8 P-B3 B-Q2, 9 Q-Q2 R-QB1, 10 B-N3 N-K4, 11 0-0-0 N-B5, 12 B × N R × B



After 12 ... R × B

Fischer–Zuckerman, 1966

Black's opening system is distinguished by his delay in castling, a delay which denies White the usual target he can assault with P–KR4–5. White can't even eliminate Black's fianchettoed bishop with 13 B–R6 because of 13 ... R × N(5)!, 14 Q × R B × B*ch*.

But there must be something wrong with Black's arrangement and Fischer places his finger on it. Black's king can be caught in the center with accurate moves.

13 N–N3! Q–B2

Now on 13 ... 0–0 White can attack with 14 B–R6 but he also has a powerful thrust in 14 P–K5 since 14 ... P × P loses material on the queen file to 15 N–B5.

14 B–Q4! B–K3

White had his second threat in the form of 15 B × N B × B, 16 N–Q5 followed (after a Black queen move) by 17 N × B*ch*. Black's move covers Q4 but leaves the queen file only partially blocked.

15 P–K5! P × P, 16 B × KP Q–B1

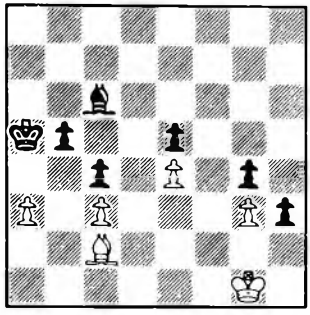
Not 16 ... Q × B??, 17 Q–Q8 *mate*. But Black must lose material now: 17 N–R5 R–B4, 18 N × P!

17 N–R5 R–B2, 18 B × R Q × B

And Black played on for another 18 moves but the game is already headed to an obvious conclusion.

After a Fischer draw with Evans in Round 7 and then a draw with Addison, the battle for first place was still uncertain. But the champion finished off with three strong victories reminiscent of his finest form. In 100 moves he ground down Sherwin — who was making perhaps his last championship appearance and was doing very well indeed. The second game was a demonstration of technique against Reshevsky, playing Black, who lost a pawn in an opening line known for years to be inferior (1 P–K4 P–QB4, 2 N–KB3 P–K3, 3 P–Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N–KB3, 5 N–QB3 P–Q3, 6 P–KN4 P–Q4?, 7 P × P N × P, 8 B–N5*ch*! B–Q2, 9 N × N P × N, 10 Q–K2*ch* Q–K2, 11 B–K3 P–KN3, 12 B × B*ch* N × B, 13 N–N5 N–K4, 14 0–0–0 B–N2, 15 R × P).

And the third was a fine ending — and Fischer's 12th straight victory — over the man he replaced as U.S. champion back in 1957.



Bisguier–Fischer, 1966
After 69 K–N1

White is tied up. His bishop must watch the KP and keep the Black king out of R5. His king must stay near the RP. It is almost Zugzwang. But not quite, because Bisguier can always play something like K–R2–R1–N1 if Fischer tries to force him to move his bishop.

Black must find another way to win. And he does:

69 ... B × P!!

This required more calculation than it appears at first glance because 70 B × B K–R5 frees the bishop, e.g. 71 B–B5 K × P, 72 B × P K–N6, 73 B–Q7 with some chances of survival.

70 B × B K–R5, 71 B–B5 K–N6!

This is what he had to see. The RP doesn't matter.

72 B × P P–K5!, 73 B × P K × BP, 74 P–N4 K–Q7

And White resigned when he saw that the two Black pawns rush home before his NP does.

1968: Bobby Says No

Fischer didn't argue about the 1968 tournament. According to the USCF he didn't even respond to his invitation. The tournament was scheduled to be a 12-player event — not 16 — and Fischer would have none of it. He was off in Israel playing in a minor international event when the Americans met to choose their champion in New York that June.

"I tried to get him to play," said Evans, a longtime friend, when asked if he had something to do with Fischer's refusal. "He was

18th U.S. Championship, New York, Dec. 10–29, 1966

	F	E	B	S	B	A	S	B	R	R	B	Z	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Fischer	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	8	3	0	9½–1½
2. Evans	½	X	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	0	1	5	5	1	7½–3½
3–4. Benko	0	½	X	0	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	4	4	3	6–5
3–4. Sherwin	0	½	1	X	½	1	1	½	½	0	1	0	4	4	3	6–5
5. Bisguier	0	0	0	½	X	½	1	0	½	1	1	1	4	3	4	5½–5½
6–7. Addison	½	0	1	0	½	X	1	0	1	½	½	0	3	4	4	5–6
6–7. Saidy	0	½	½	0	0	0	X	1	1	½	1	½	3	4	4	5–6
8–10. R. Byrne	½	½	0	½	1	1	0	X	½	½	0	0	2	5	4	4½–6½
8–10. Reshevsky	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
8–10. Rossolimo	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
11–12. D. Byrne	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	1	0	½	X	1	3	2	6	4–7
11–12. Zuckerman	0	0	½	1	0	1	½	1	0	0	0	X	3	2	6	4–7

adamant." Evans wanted to make this perfectly clear because he had finished a commanding second the previous year and had won the *last* time Fischer had failed to appear to defend his title. It wasn't his fault that he was the favorite, Evans seemed to say.

The scoretable included several players of relatively equal strength—grandmasters Evans, Reshevsky, Byrne, Lombardy, Benko and Bisguier—plus a handful of erratic players who could beat anyone on a given day—Saidy, Zuckerman and Rossolimo. And then three players who were there because of high ratings, upon which the invitations were largely based—Seidman and Horowitz, both over the hill, and Tibor Weinberger. The last-named, a Hungarian émigré living in Los Angeles, was a tactician making his first and most likely last championship appearance.

Lombardy, returning to the event after a seven-year sabbatical, was now a priest. His daily labors cut into his playing energy, as did Bisguier's work for *Chess Review*. Bisguier's game with that magazine's editor, Horowitz, a draw, was the first time a player had to meet his boss in a U.S. championship. The editor's decision to come out of playing retirement seemed to be a recognition of an end of an era. He would sell his magazine the next year and wanted to get in a few last moments of championship glory. But he was 60 years old, and no Reshevsky.

Catalan Opening
***white* Benko, *black* Horowitz**

1 P-QB4 P-QB3, 2 N-KB3 P-Q4, 3 P-QN3 N-B3, 4 P-N3 P-K3, 5 B-KN2 B-K2, 6 0-0 0-0, 7 B-N2 P-QR4, 8 P-QR3 P-B4?, 9 P × P! P × P, 10 P-Q4!

Black's handling of the opening is highly questionable as it allows White a vigorous position in the center. Black usually gets active piece play in exchange for an isolated QP in similar positions but here he doesn't get the development.

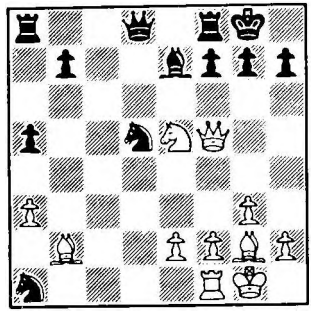
10 ... N-R3, 11 N-B3 B-B4, 12 N-K5 P × P, 13 Q × P N-B4

Black's idea is to capture—and also fork the queen and rook—on QN6. If White watches that square with 14 Q-Q1 he allows 14 ... P-Q5! when the isolated QP breathes fire. But Benko snuffs it out in advance.

14 N × QP! N × P, 15 Q-KB4 N × N?

No better was 15 ... N × R, 16 Q × B N–N6, 17 R–Q1 when White has a killing threat of N × N*ch* (17 ... N × N, 18 B × N and 19 B × P*ch*). Black's best was to batten down the hatches with 15 ... B–K3.

16 Q × B N × R



After 16 ... N × R

Benko–Horowitz, 1968

17 N × P!!

Black was hoping for 17 R–Q1 which looks strong but which permits 17 ... N–K6! (18 R × Q N × Q). After Benko's brilliant shot Black cannot take the knight because of 17 ... R × N, 18 B × N Q–K1, 19 R × N which wins material.

17 ... Q–B1, 18 N–R6*ch* K–R1, 19 Q × N N–B7, 20 Q–N8*ch*! and Black resigns.

It's the smothered mate (20 ... R × Q, 21 N–B7).

At the other end of the crosstable were Evans, Reshevsky and Byrne. Byrne, then an Indianapolis college instructor, was beginning to modify his superpositional, Nimzovichian style and play to win in the middlegame as he had against Evans in the 17th championship. Evans, however, was even more defense-oriented than he had been in the late 1950s when his style became pronounced. He took a matter-of-fact, highly unromantic attitude towards winning games and toward the game of chess itself.

One day during the tournament Saidy, an archromantic, spoke of chess as a way of life, a thought that drew out a pang of annoyance from Evans. "Ridiculous," he said, "Chess is an escape. I learned chess as a boy to escape from life. When everbody else was enjoying life, I was playing chess." Evans explained that he was willing to indulge in this escape for three exasperating weeks every year because he needed the prize money. "Chess is my bread and butter," he said.

Reshevsky, who had been making a living from the game for longer than anyone could remember, played the most exciting chess of all contestants in the 19th championship. Where Evans was the cool technician, Reshevsky was a seeker of ideas, mainly tactical ideas. Although he usually won through the accumulation of many small advantages, Sammy often did the accumulating through tactical means:

Gruenfeld Defense
white Reshevsky, *black* Seidman

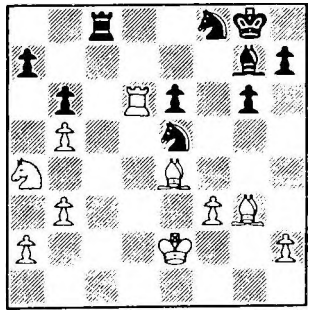
1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-KN3, 3 N-QB3 P-Q4, 4 N-B3 B-N2, 5 B-B4 0-0, 6 R-B1 P-B4, 7 QP × P B-K3, 8 P-K3 Q-R4, 9 N-Q4 N-B3!?, 10 N × B P × N, 11 Q-R4 Q × P, 12 Q-N5!

The endgame favors White because of his superior pawn structure. It is not just a matter of doubled pawns. (White's queenside pawns will also become doubled.) Yet the pawn to reach QN5 will deny Black pieces a vital square at his QB3 and thereby enable White to load up the QB and Q files with his own pieces.

12 ... Q × Q, 13 P × Q! N-N1, 14 B-Q3 QN-Q2, 15 K-K2 P-K4, 16 B-N3 P-K5, 17 B-N1, QR-B1, 18 N-R4 N-N5, 19 KR-Q1 P-K3, 20 R × R R × R, 21 P-B3!

This begins Reshevsky's thrust against the weakened enemy center. The chief beneficiaries of an exchange of pawns there will be his bishops.

21 ... P × P*ch*, 22 P × P KN-K4, 23 P-K4! P × P, 24 B × P P-N3, 25 R-Q6 N-B1, 26 P-N3



After 26 P-N3

Reshevsky-Seidman, 1968

26 ... P-N4, 27 N × P!

19th U.S. Championship, New York, July 14–31, 1968

	E	B	R	B	B	L	R	S	Z	H	W	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Evans	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	6	5	0	8½–2½
2. R. Byrne	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	5	6	0	8–3
3. Reshevsky	½	½	X	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	4	6	1	7–4
4. Benko	½	½	1	X	½	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	5	3	3	6½–4½
5–6. Bisguier	½	½	½	½	X	0	0	1	½	½	1	1	3	6	2	6–5
5–6. Lombardy	0	½	½	1	1	X	½	½	½	½	1	0	3	6	2	6–5
7–9. Rossolimo	0	0	0	0	1	½	X	1	1	½	½	1	4	3	4	5½–5½
7–9. Saidy	0	0	½	1	0	½	0	X	½	1	1	1	4	3	4	5½–5½
7–9. Zuckerman	½	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	2	7	2	5½–5½
10. Horowitz	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	1	½	1	6	4	4–7
11. Weinberger, T.	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	X	1	1	2	8	2–9
12. Seidman	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	X	1	1	9	1½–9½

Black has covered all his weak pawns and White will not be able to make progress through normal means, such as by getting a rook to the seventh rank. Reshevsky knows well what it takes to win such a position and experience tells him there is no risk in this sacrifice.

27 ... P × N, 28 R × NP P-R4, 29 R-R6 P-R5, 30 B-KB2 N(4)-N3, 31 R-R8!

After this Black must try to stop the three queenside pawns with his bishop and two knights. It's a mismatch:

31 ... R × R, 32 B × R B-K4, 33 B-N1 N-B5*ch*, 34 K-B1 N-Q2, 35 P-R4 B-B2, 36 B-B6 N-N1, 37 B-K4 N-Q4, 38 B × N P × B, 39 P-N4 K-B2, 40 P-R5 N-Q2, 41 P-N6 B-Q1, 42 P-N7 N-N1, 43 B-R7! B-B2, 44 P-N5 N-Q2, 45 P-R6 B × P, 46 P-N8(Q)! and Black resigns.

But Reshevsky lost to Benko, who had just married his childhood sweetheart from Hungary and was inspired to play some of his best chess. The loss knocked Reshevsky out of the race for first place and left it to Byrne and Evans. Both finished unbeaten, and they drew with one another. What was the difference in their scores? Evans won a sloppily defended King's Indian against Lombardy, while Byrne could only draw with Lombardy. Larry Evans, 36, had retained his position—he was still the only other person to win a championship since the advent of Bobby Fischer.

1969: Back to Square One

The 1960's ended with a blast from Fischer and the last championship of an era. For 13 years the tournament had come to be a matter of two questions: Will Bobby play? If so, what will his winning margin be? The questions ended with the 20th championship as he made clear his feelings about the tournament.

"Dear Ed," he wrote USCF president Ed Edmondson in answer to his invitation. Fischer's words quickly assumed an adversary tone as he accused Edmondson of lying about the previous championship. He *had* responded to the USCF in 1968, and in writing, Bobby said. What he said then and still felt was that the championship had to be extended to 22 rounds "as it is in the Soviet Union, Hungary, Rumania and other East European countries where chess is taken seriously." Without this change, he would not play again for his own nation's title. Twelve rounds was "too chancy."

The former champion acknowledged that by not playing in the impending tournament—a zonal—he would be putting off his hopes for the *world* championship. According to FIDE rules, Fischer would not be able to qualify for the 1970–72 cycle of the world title elimination unless he survived the U.S. tournament. If he passed that up, he would have to wait until 1975 for a crack at Boris Spassky's crown. The implication—that chess bureaucrats were denying America a world champion—was clear, and Fischer used it to put pressure on the USCF by sending the news media copies of the "Dear Ed" letter.

As it turned out, he did not have to wait for 1975. With Edmondson's help Fischer leapfrogged the zonal stage in 1970 and blitzed his way to the title in 1972. And by 1975 he was an ex-world champion, having been stripped of his title by refusing to play his first challenger.

The 20th championship was therefore a milestone, if only because it was the last in which Fischer's participation was even considered. But it was also significant because it was the last of an almost unbroken string of annual tournaments that had begun in 1957 with the initiative of the ACF. And 1960–70 was also the end of an era when the 1950s generation had domination over the event.

The 20th championship might then have been an afterthought, an era-closing event that would quickly be forgotten. Actually it was one of the most exciting of the series that had begun 33 years before. First, the spectators were surprised to see the early rounds marked by a tremendous spurt from Addison. The pipe-smoking Californian, often dressed in a three-piece suit, came to New York looking like a visiting business executive ready to take over a conglomerate. He didn't take home the top prize but he put to rest the idea of Eastern hegemony over the championship.

Addison, who had just earned his international master title, began with a blitz of Robert Byrne, Saidy and Bisguier. Then came a loss to Evans—Evans' highpoint for the tournament—followed by wins over Burger and Mednis. Although rated in the lower half of the scoretable when play first began, he was running away with the tournament at the midway point. Here is how he began:

King's Indian Defense
white **Addison,** ***black*** **R. Byrne**

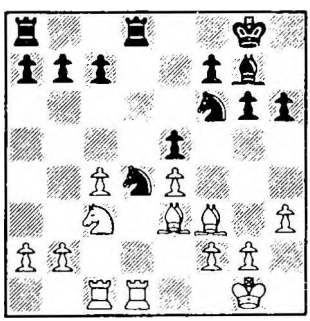
1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-KN3, 3 N-QB3 B-N2, 4 P-K4 P-Q3, 5 N-B3 0-0, 6 B-K2 P-K4, 7 0-0 N-B3, 8 B-K3 R-K1, 9 P × P P × P, 10 Q × Q R × Q?!

Black's finesse of 8 ... R–K1 was once hailed as a simple equalizing answer to one of White's more popular weapons against the King's Indian. If 9 P–Q5 Black can play 9 ... N–Q5!, 10 N × N P × N, 11 B × P N × KP with at least equal chances. But Addison is looking for a new path, an endgame route, to advantage, and against a theoretician like Byrne it succeeds surprisingly well. Even Fischer had a hard time drumming up counterchances in the endgame that follows 10 ... N × Q, 11 N–QN5 N–K3, 12 N–N5! R–K2!

11 B–N5!

The threat is 12 N–Q5 and it isn't easy to meet. After 11 ... R–Q2 White can try Benko's suggestion, 12 B–Q1! followed by 13 B–QR4.

11 ... R–B1, 12 KR–Q1 B–N5, 13 QR–B1 P–KR3, 14 B–K3 KR–Q1, 15 P–KR3 B × N, 16 B × B N–Q5



After 16 ... N–Q5

Addison–R. Byrne, 1969

The centralization of this knight appears to eliminate all danger. White is probably a little worse after 17 B × N P × B, but what else can he do about ... N × B?

17 N–N5! N–K1

Byrne realizes that 17 ... N × B*ch*, 18 P × N will cost him a pawn. He could capture on N5 but after White retakes he would have strong pressure against the queenside as Reshevsky had demonstrated in the 19th championship against Seidman. So, Black must go on the defensive:

18 N × N P × N, 19 B–B4 P–QB3, 20 R–Q3 P–KN4, 21 B–N3 R–Q2, 22 P–B5! QR–Q1, 23 B–N4 R–K2, 24 P–B3 B–K4, 25 B × B R × B, 26 R–B4 N–N2, 27 R(4) × P R × R, 28 R × R R × BP, 29 P–KR4!

Addison has nurtured a microscopic advantage thus far. He has the better placed rook and a superior minor piece. He needs some targets for his pieces and with that in mind he gives up the minor piece edge in order to weaken pawns and get his rook to the seventh rank. U.S. championships have seen relatively few of these finely tuned endgame victories.

29 ... R-N4, 30 R-Q8*ch* K-R2, 31 P-QN3 N-K3, 32 B × N P × B, 33 P-R5! P-N5!, 34 R-Q7*ch* K-N1, 35 P × P R-N5, 36 K-B2 R × KP, 37 R × P P-R4, 38 R-QR7 R-K4, 39 K-B3 R-QB4, 40 K-B4 R-QN4, 41 R-K7 R-N5*ch*, 42 K-B3 P-R5, 43 P × P R × RP, 44 R × P K-R2, 45 R × P R × RP, 46 K-N3 R-R6*ch*, 47 K-R2 R-R5, 48 R-KN6 R-N5, 49 P-N3 R-N8, 50 P-N5 P × P, 51 K-R3! R-N5, 52 R × P K-R3, 53 R-KB5 R-R5, 54 P-N4 R-R8, 55 R-B6*ch* K-N4, 56 R-N6*ch* K-B5, 57 K-N2 R-R7*ch*, 58 K-B1! K-B6, 59 K-K1 K-K6, 60 K-Q1 K-Q6, 61 K-B1 K-B6, 62 R-B6*ch*! K-Q5, 63 P-R6 R-KN7, 64 P-R7 R-KR7, 65 R-B7 K-K5, 66 P-N5 Black resigns.

Byrne was never closer to the lead than a point after this; by Round 6 only Reshevsky had a chance of stopping Addison. In the Fischer championships Sammy had often been a major factor—the round of the Fischer–Reshevsky game was always the best attended—but he was not always a contestant for first place. Reshevsky hadn't actually won the championship since 1946, when Fischer was three years old. Now,in a Fischer-less field, he knew how each member of the 1950s generation could be beaten. Addison, who didn't develop into a player of consequence until the 1960s, was not so easy and he held Reshevsky to a draw.

But Addison was upset, if upset was the word, by Donald Byrne in Round 8. Byrne, who spent his free hours grading the papers of his English literature students, was playing in one of his rare championships. Chronically plagued by ill health, time pressure and the press of his career work, Donald had not achieved a plus score in the tournament in 10 years. But he could still win a big game.

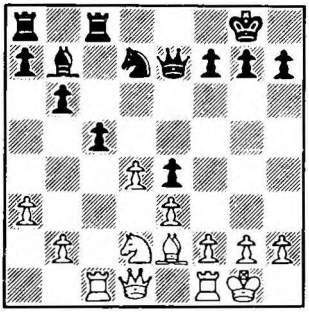
So, Reshevsky took the lead for the first time in Round 9 and held it going into the final day. The pairings were Evans versus Reshevsky and Addison (a half point behind the leader) versus Lombardy. Benko and Lombardy were only a half point behind Addison and each could earn a share of the lead if the results were right. Reshevsky knew this and offered an early draw, which would clinch a spot in the interzonal tournament of 1970 regardless of what happened in the other games. Evans declined. ("I would have declined, too," Sammy said later.) So...

Queen's Indian Defense
white Evans, *black* Reshevsky

1 P–Q4 N–KB3, 2 P–QB4 P–K3, 3 N–KB3 P–QN3, 4 N–B3 B–N2, 5 P–QR3 P–Q4, 6 B–N5 B–K2, 7 P–K3 0–0, 8 R–B1 N–K5!, 9 B × B Q × B, 10 P × P P × P, 11 N × N? P × N, 12 N–Q2 R–B1!

White has gotten nothing out of the opening and should begin to become concerned about Black's liquidation of the center with ... P–QB4. Without a QP, White has a disadvantage in space and a little less development than Black.

13 B–K2 N–Q2, 14 0–0 P–QB4



After 14 ... P–QB4

Evans–Reshevsky, 1969

15 P × P?

This permits Black to sink his knight into the ideal square, Q6. Did Evans think that getting his own knight to Q4 outweighed that factor? It's hard to believe.

15 ... N × P, 16 N–N3 R–Q1, 17 Q–B2 N–Q6!, 18 QR–Q1 QR–B1, 19 Q–N1 R–Q3

The Black rook is headed for R3 or N3 to support the queen at R5 or N4. White's kingside is vulnerable because he cannot defend it with a knight on KB3 and because his queen is out of the game. But with his next move he threatens N–KB5.

20 N–Q4 R × N!

This is not speculative at all. Black could have calculated this out to the

20th U.S. Championship, New York, Nov. 30–Dec. 17, 1969

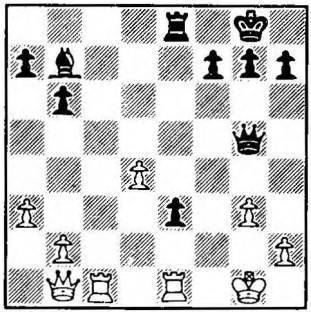
	R	A	B	L	B	E	M	Z	B	B	S	B	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Reshevsky	X	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	5	6	0	8–3
2. Addison	½	X	½	1	0	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	6	3	2	7½–3½
3. Benko	½	½	X	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	4	6	1	7–4
4. Lombardy	0	0	1	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	3	6	2	6–5
5–8. D. Byrne	½	1	0	½	X	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	2	7	2	5½–5½
5–8. Evans	0	1	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	2	7	2	5½–5½
5–8. Mednis	½	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	1	2	7	2	5½–5½
5–8. Zuckerman	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	9	1	5½–5½
9–11. Bisguier	½	0	½	½	1	0	½	0	X	½	0	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
9–11. R. Byrne	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	1	7	3	4½–6½
9–11. Saidy	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	0	X	1	2	5	4	4½–6½
12. Burger	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	X	0	4	7	2–9

winning endgame he reaches in nine moves or the dead won king-and-pawn ending he gets in 14.

21 P × R N–B5, 22 KR–K1 Q–N4, 23 P–N3 P–K6!

Black's main threat is to get the queen to the KN7 or KR8 squares by way of Q4. It's easy to see that 24 P × P loses to 24 ... N–R6*ch* and 25 ... Q–B3*ch*.

24 P–B3 N × B*ch*, 25 R × N B × P, 26 R–QB1 R–K1, 27 R(2)–K1 B–N2!



After 27 ... B–N2

Evans–Reshevsky, 1969

Reshevsky finds his way to an elementary, winning endgame within a few moves:

28 R–B7 Q–Q4, 29 R × B Q × R, 30 Q–Q3 Q–K5!, 31 Q × Q R × Q, 32 K–N2 P–B4, 33 K–B3 K–B2, 34 R × P R × R*ch*, 35 K × R P–KN4!, 36 P–KR4 P–KR3, 37 P–Q5 K–K2, 38 K–Q4 K–Q3, 39 P × P P × P, 40 P–R4 P–R4, 41 P–N3 P–N5!, 42 K–K3 K × P, 43 K–Q3 K–B4, 44 K–K3 K–N5, 45 K–B4 K × P, 46 K × P K × P, 47 K × P K–N5! and **White resigns.**

An era was ending and matters were back where they were in 1956: Sammy Reshevsky was again the best player in the tournament. "Maybe I'll be world champion when I'm 60," he said.

Chapter Nine

Primus Inter Pares (1972–1985)

With the notable and perennial exception of Reshevsky, the names and faces in the championship had changed with each generation. But the tournament itself had remained pretty much what it was in 1936: a regularly scheduled, 12-to-16-player New York event featuring a roughly even balance of professional and amateur players, most of whom came from the New York area. This—and much more—changed after 1972.

The first and most obvious difference was the absence of a dominating figure. Fischer had virtually been conceded first place whenever he entered the championship in the 1960s. But with his defeat of Boris Spassky in Reykjavik he no longer had any interest in American chess or, as it later seemed, in chess at all. Without him to attract fans, contributions and media attention there was some question as to whether there was any value to holding an annual tournament. And indeed the championship was not scheduled in 1970 or 1971.

When it was resumed in 1972 a pattern of irregularly held tournaments developed. There would be championships in 1972, 73, 74 and 75, but not in 76, again in 1977 and 1978 but not in 79. Yes in 80 and 81, no in 82. More significantly, there was no clear favorite during the new Fischer-less era. There would be several different champions and several ties for the title. In the first 20 tournaments only seven different men had held or shared the national title. But in the 12 years after 1972 there were ten different champions.

And while Fischer's absence took something away from the tournament, his rise left a deep impression that would motivate future competitors. Before 1972 there had been little enthusiasm for world titles. After all, the Russians had held the individual and team titles for 20 years or more. What was the use of trying to beat them?

This attitude filtered down to the youngest masters, such as the

competitors for the 1971 U.S. Junior title. Besides the junior title there were two prizes that year. First prize was a trip to Athens to represent America in the prestigious World Junior tournament. Second prize was a trip to the U.S. Open in Ventura, California. When the U.S. Junior ended in a tie, the two winners had to flip a coin. Greg DeFotis picked heads and won the toss—and decided he's rather go to Southern California. Ken Rogoff, disappointed on missing out on a free trip to the Open, had to settle for the Greek capital. (He surprised himself by nearly winning the event.)

Fischer's success showed that the Russians weren't supermen, and that invitations to the interzonal qualifying events were very valuable indeed. The invitations in FIDE Zone 5 (the United States) were decided every three years by the championship, and it was no surprise that the strongest events of the next decade were the zonals—1972, 75, 78, 81 and 84.

There were other fundamental changes at work. The tournament was loosened from its New York moorings after 1972 and permitted to come to port wherever there was local sponsorship, organization and enthusiasm. Within the next decade it shifted from the East Coast to the West and to the Mexican Border and Great Lakes, greatly widening the audience of fans who had never before seen top-caliber chess.

This was made easier from a financial point of view because of a substantial change in the invitation list. During the Fischer period pretty much the same group of players was invited year after year. And, since they all lived in or around New York, it became the most appropriate (and cheapest) venue. In fact, four local grandmasters—Benko, Byrne, Bisguier and Reshevsky—each played in at least 10 of the 11 championships between 1957 and 1969. The four of them accounted for more than a third of the names on the scoretables. And there were only 14 new faces seen in the championships of the Fischer years.

But in the next 11 tournaments there were *38 new faces*. Fewer than half—many fewer, in fact—came from New York. The newcomers arrived from the Midwest (William Martz, DeFotis, Andrew Karklins, Milan Vukcevich) and West (James Tarjan, Nick deFirmian, Larry Christiansen, Kim Commons) and included Texans (Ron Henley and Joseph Bradford), a transplanted Bostonian (Jack Peters), a Syrian-born Seattle student (Yasser Seirawan) and others from Maryland, Oregon and Virginia.

The new competitors also came from overseas, and the emigration of Eastern Europeans to the United States made perhaps the most convulsive change. Within a few years the tournament found itself with a growing minority of players whose first language was not English, but

Russian (Lev Alburt, Anatoly Lein, Boris Kogan, Sergey Kudrin, Leonid Shamkovich and Vitaly Zaltsman). Remembering that Reshevsky was born in Poland and that Kavalek had come from Czechoslovakia, a fan might notice during the opening rounds of the 1981 championship that only three native-born Americans had won a game in the first four days of play.

This migration contributed to yet another change: It suddenly became very hard, even for the nation's premier players to get invited to the championship. During the 1960's (and as late as 1975), all American grandmasters were automatically seeded into the event and other contestants were chosen according to rating. Even with all of the top players accepting their invitations, the rating cutoff occasionally dipped below 2400—a point that could then be said to distinguish the upper echelon of American chess from the merely strong.

But even with the field expanded to 16 players, as it was in the late 1970s, there wasn't enough room to accommodate all the grandmasters, let alone the other highly-rated competitors. Moreover, the unfairness of seeding a GM who had not played well—or at all—in the last few years rather than a more highly rated youngster was obvious. By the late 1960s the rating cutoff had risen to 2400 and pushed over 2440 by the mid-1970s. For the 1984 championship it had reached an unheard-of 2560, which even with an artificial inflation of points indicated there was exceptional competition for the highly-prized invitations.

William Lombardy found himself too low to be seeded in 1981 and Robert Byrne missed out in 1983. Reshevsky, who had not made the 1978 and 1980 outings, fattened up his no-longer-exceptional rating in 1981 by competing in weekend events against nonmasters where his chance of losing ground was slight. And also in 1981 the USCF added a new requirement – that players must compete in at least two domestic tournaments a year in order to qualify for future championships. A move to require Americans to play in American tournaments might seem natural, yet it was denounced bitterly by some grandmasters as being harsh, arbitrary and even "un-American." In short, during the next stage the U.S. championship became a highly competitive, well-balanced, truly national tournament.

1972: Three Kings

There were four new faces in the 21st championship but one was in a class by himself. He was Lubomir (Lubosh) Kavalek, who at 28 already had won two national championships in his native

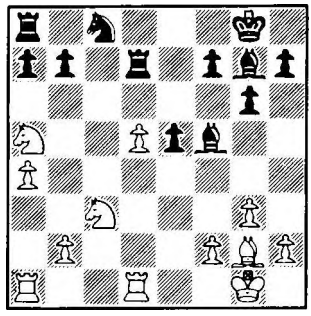
Czechoslovakia. Not long after the second of his titles, in August 1968, Kavalek found himself in Western Europe at an international tournament when word arrived of the Soviet military intervention in his homeland. He seized the opportunity to defect, becoming the first in a new wave of chess defections that would later include Viktor Korchnoi, Lev Alburt and Canadian champion Igor Ivanov.

Kavalek made the European tournament circuit his new home and quietly, while the chess world was watching Fischer's progress in 1970–72, he was maturing into one of the top ten Western players. Eventually Lubosh settled in a suburb of Washington, D.C., improved his English (one of his five languages), and arranged a comfortable life as a player, commentator and journalist. He became a true European-style grandmaster in a non-European setting.

Kavalek was the unknown factor in the 21st championship when it began at the Group Health Insurance building on West 41st Street on April 23. Would he become another Pal Benko – impressive abroad but a flop in the championship? Or would he be the new Fischer? He had all the proper equipment – an excellent theoretical background in openings and endgames and good calculating ability. His stylistic range was considerable: He could play for mate or nurse the slightest of positional advantages for sixty moves. Only his placid demeanor was a drawback: No Fischer-like will to win.

The first round was hardly a test for him but it did indicate how old the Old Guard had become. Kavalek had the black pieces that day against Al Horowitz. Al, who had sold off his magazine to the USCF, was enjoying the fruits of retirement. Playing in what turned out to be his last championship, Horowitz was intent on having fun. He slammed down his 16th move, knight to queen five, walked away from the board and with typical braggadocio, said in a stage whisper, "Not bad for a patzer!" But the move was most accurately described as 16 N–Q5?? as it lost material immediately and soon cost him the game.

The second round also seemed an unworthy test for Kavalek because he was clearly better all along against 20-year-old Greg DeFotis, the stronger of two talented chessplaying brothers from Chicago. DeFotis defended skillfully enough to draw, one of several such rescues by him in the event. Meanwhile, it was Lombardy, with wins over Feuerstein and Brooklyn chemistry teacher Orest Popovych, who took the lead with 2–0. The young priest, now fully ordained and teaching English to parochial school students each morning, was carrying a heavy load, and he lost to Reshevsky on the next day. The oldest competitor then built up a one-point lead in the succeeding four rounds – but saw the benefits of his work go down the drain in his seventh game.



Reshevsky–Kavalek, 1972
After 22 ... N–B1

Going in for the kill, Reshevsky figured he could obtain a clear advantage by a temporary pawn sacrifice.

23 P–Q6? N × P!, 24 R–Q2

White can get the pawn back with 24 N × P N × N, 25 R × R B × R, 26 B × N but he couldn't keep it after 26 ... R–N1.

24 ... QR–Q1

Here Reshevsky realized his error. He had thought (before 23 P–Q6) that the pin on the Q file would be decisive and that he would cash in on it with 25 QR–Q1 P–N3, 26 N–B4. But when this position appeared on the board Reshevsky realized that the rook on Black's Q2 was defended by a bishop as well as by its fellow rook. There was no pin on the queen file after all.

White's best try here is 25 R × N R × R, 26 N × P regaining material—but not positional—equality.

25 P–R3? P–K5, 26 QR–Q1 P–N3, 27 N–B6 N–B5

And here White made a third mistake by trading in rooks. After 28 R × R R × R, 29 R × R B × R, 30 B × P N × P, 31 N–N5 P–QR4 he lost a second, and ultimately decisive, pawn.

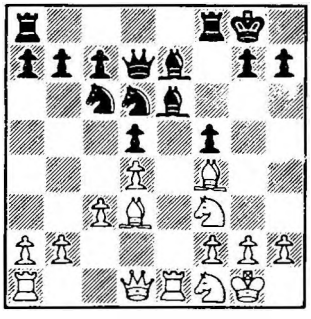
This put Reshevsky back in a tie for first place. He emerged from it briefly in Round 8 by beating Larry Kaufman, a 24-year-old stock investor from Silver Spring, Md., but Kavalek won the brilliancy prize the next day against the same Kaufman while Reshevsky fell to another contender:

Petrov Defense
white R. Byrne, *black* Reshevsky

1 P–K4 P–K4, 2 N–KB3 N–KB3, 3 P–Q4 N × P, 4 N × P P–Q3, 5 N–KB3 P–Q4, 6 B–Q3 B–K2, 7 0–0 N–QB3, 8 R–K1 N–Q3

Bisguier had been playing the Petrov earlier in the tournament ("I can draw with it blindfolded") and had just split a point the previous day against Kavalek with 8 ... B–KB4. Reshevsky's move also aims at an exchange of bishops (9 ... B–KB4) while denying White the opportunity to spice up the center situation with 9 P–B4. But Byrne crosses him up (9 B–KB4 B–KB4?, 10 B × N! wins material).

9 B–KB4! 0–0, 10 P–B3 B–K3?, 11 QN–Q2 Q–Q2, 12 N–B1 P–B4?!



After 12 ... P–B4

R. Byrne–Reshevsky, 1972

Black is beginning to make concessions – greater concessions than necessary. He could have eased his game considerably with 10 ... B–N5 or now with 12 ... B–B4, rather than weakening his king file.

13 Q–K2 N–K5, 14 N–K5 N × N, 15 B × N B–B3, 16 B × B R × B, 17 P–B3!

This is the difference between White and Black. Byrne can oust an enemy piece from his K4 but his own pieces can remain forever on Reshevsky's K4. He prepares to mine the open file:

17 ... N–Q3, 18 Q–QB2 R–K1, 19 R–K5 P–KN3, 20 QR–K1 B–B2, 21 N–K3 P–B3, 22 Q–B2! K–N2, 23 P–KN4!

This begins a delayed kingside attack. Black cannot capture on N5 because White's knight joins up with the queen powerfully (23 ... P × P, 24 N × NP R(3)–K3, 25 Q–Q2! and 26 Q–R6*ch*).

23 ... N-K5

A nice try: Black is very much alive after 24 P × N BP × P.

24 Q-N2 P-B5, 25 N-B5*ch*! P × N, 26 P × P*ch* K-R1

Reshevsky's position collapses quickly because of the pressure on the diagonal leading to his KN3 and on the K file. Byrne has a neat finishing strike coming up.

27 R × R*ch* Q × R, 28 P × N R × P, 29 Q-N4 B-N3, 30 K-B2!

This does it. The pin along the K file is relieved and a road to a won endgame is opened (30 ... P × P, 31 B × P R-B1, 32 B × B for example).

30 ... R-B2, 31 P × P R-K2?, 32 B × B and Black resigned.

This left Kavalek in first place, a half point ahead of Byrne and Reshevsky. No one had won the championship on the first try except Bisguier and so Kavalek's performance in a much stronger field than 1954 was notable. But being a European-style grandmaster has its drawbacks and one of them is the casual Continental attitude towards other GMs. Lubosh seemed to make only half-hearted attempts to beat his middle-of-the-scoretable rivals and content to score his points against what Byrne called the "Swiss-happy contenders of the 'lunge now, look later' school." So while Kavalek was drawing quietly with Evans in Round 10, Byrne caught up with him. Reshevsky made it a three-way tie in the twelfth round, creating the tightest last-round situation in championship history to that time.

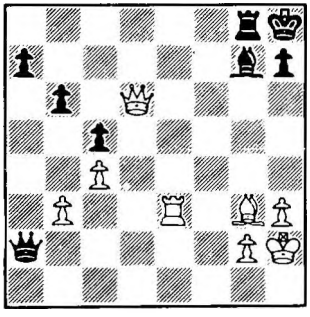
In addition to the three leaders—Kavalek, Byrne and Reshevsky—there were two other grandmasters, Benko and Evans, with a chance to tie for first prize. Even Lombardy and the tenacious DeFotis had a shot at making one of the two interzonal spots, by finishing in a massive tie for second prize. As for money, a win by one of the leaders could mean more than $2000 while a loss could drop them to a $500 prize.

But in the final round Kavalek was due to meet Benko, a pairing which virtually guaranteed a draw. Byrne might have edged ahead of him with a win over DeFotis, but he fell into a three-time repetition and only drew. In the last key game William Martz, a law student from Wisconsin, was White against Reshevsky. Martz was an expert in two areas of chess—the Four Pawns Attack in the King's Indian Defense and rook-and-pawn endgames. He got an opportunity to display both talents

against the hard-pressing Reshevsky and the game was drawn without adjournment.

For the first time a championship had ended in a *three-way* tie. Because only two spots in the interzonals were available under a new FIDE apportionment, a playoff was necessary. It began in February 1973 in Chicago and this time Kavalek was outclassed. He tried to be more adventurous than he had been in New York and paid the positional price in a disappointing loss to Reshevsky.

Byrne, however, was beginning to play the best chess of his life, using his newfound tactical acuity to its utmost. He was only in trouble in one game and this turned out to be the decisive one of the playoff. Reshevsky could lock up first place in the double-round event and clear claim to his seventh title with a victory in this position:



Reshevsky–R. Byrne, 1972
After 38 ... Q × RP

He is poised for the coup de grâce but, as in his tournament game with Kavalek, Reshevsky errs badly at the moment of truth. There are two very strong-looking moves—39 R–K7, which the Monday-morning annotators found to be decisive, and 39 B–K5. Reshevsky had only seconds to make a choice.

39 B–K5??

The threat is 40 B × B*ch* followed by rook and queen checks that must end in mate. But there is one remarkable defense and Byrne, also short of time, found it:

39 ... Q × P*ch*!, 40 K × Q B × B*ch*

And with his extra piece (41 ... B × Q) Byrne won the title and began his own road to the world championship eliminations. For his pains Reshevsky finished second and also qualified for the interzonals.

21st U.S. Championship, New York, April 23–May 15, 1972

	B	K	R	E	B	D	L	M	B	M	K	F	H	P	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–3. R. Byrne	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	5	8	0	9–4
1–3. Kavalek	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	5	8	0	9–4
1–3. Reshevsky	0	0	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	7	4	2	9–4
4. Evans	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	5	7	1	8½–4½
5. Benko	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	3	10	0	8–5
6–7. DeFotis	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	0	1	½	1	½	1	½	3	9	1	7½–5½
6–7. Lombardy	½	½	0	0	½	½	X	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	5	3	7½–5½
8. Mednis	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	4	6	3	7–6
9–10. Bisguier	½	½	0	1	½	0	0	½	X	½	½	1	1	½	3	7	3	6½–6½
9–10. Martz	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	3	7	3	6½–6½
11. Kaufman	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	1	1	1	3	4	6	5–8
12. Feuerstein	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	X	1	½	1	4	8	3–10
13. Horowitz	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	0	X	1	2	1	10	2½–10½
14. Popovych	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	X	0	4	9	2–11

1973: The Darkest Horse

For the first time in 25 years the championship tournament left New York City. It headed for El Paso, Texas, where the local chess club and Jaycee unit promised a well-organized tournament not far from the Mexican border. The tournament invitations also promised a pronounced non–New York character. Seven of the invitees, all under 30, were playing for the first time—the largest crop of rookies in memory. They assumed the places left when Byrne declined his invitation in order to prepare for a candidates match with Boris Spassky and Reshevsky also said no because he would be playing in the Petropolis, Brazil, interzonal. Among other GMs, Lombardy declined at the very last minute—his telegram cancelling out arrived just before the first round began.

This meant that Kavalek, the only survivor from the Chicago playoff, and Evans were clearly seen as the frontrunners when play began at the Hotel Paso del Norte on September 9. But handicapping is a dangerous game—as the players learned during one of the tournament's free days. (The players crossed the border to bet on the dog races in Juarez, Mexico, but no one would risk his money on the dog named "Check" in the sixth race. Naturally, he won.)

Had they also bet on the outcome of the 22nd championship it is likely no one would have put his money on both winners. The event was notable for its surprise result and also for the debut of three youngsters:

Walter Browne. The son of a Wall Street businessman, Browne had emerged suddenly in the mid-1960s as the most promising U.S. junior since Fischer. Walter had also grown up in Brooklyn and cut his tactical teeth at the Manhattan Chess Club before winning a host of junior and Swiss open titles. But Browne, born January 10, 1949, in Australia, enjoyed dual citizenship and left the United States in 1969 to compete under the Aussie flag as the world's youngest GM. Three years later he had a change of heart and settled in California, Fischer's adopted state. Browne quickly became the hardest fighting member of the new generation, an intense, nervous player who gave 110 percent of himself in every game, analyzed every conceivable variation and, as a result, was frequently at war with his side of the chess clock. (And sometimes with his tournament director as well.)

James Tarjan. Tarjan was then a 21-year-old humanities student from the University of California at Berkeley and son of a noted Hungarian-born psychiatrist. Although he had none of Browne's international experience, Tarjan had shown hints of future stardom in West Coast events. He had been playing chess nearly as long as Browne, three years his elder, but his uneven style and spotty opening knowledge

tended to hold him behind his rivals in junior events, such as DeFotis and Rogoff of Rochester, N.Y. Only after remedying his opening weakness did Tarjan demonstrate his true ability and he remedied it in an odd way: He signed up to work on a construction project where for weeks his only outlet after a day of physical labor was a chess set and a book on the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defense. By September 1973 Tarjan had refuted many of the older lines, discovered his own favorites and was soon one of the world's experts on this complex, aggressive variation.

John Grefe. Grefe, a 25-year-old master originally from Hoboken, N.J., had grown up competing with Browne in Manhattan events and like Browne had moved west in his early 20s. A quiet, tall, almost glacial young man, with an elegant positional style of play, Grefe had become a vegetarian and follower of the Indian mystic Guru Mahara-Ji. This 22nd championship was held while Grefe was deeply immersed in the creed of the teenage prophet and he explained its role in his life by saying things such as, "After each game I meditate for a while and it all fades into its proper place."

Kavalek and Browne took a 2–0 lead in the tournament's first week while Grefe was held to a second-round draw by another newcomer, George Kane. Kane, a Northern Californian then living in New York, had profited from an accelerated mechanism in the USCF rating system that had gained him more than 300 rating points as a result of one Marshall Chess Club Championship. He held the superior position throughout his game with Grefe and their eventual draw later grew in significance as Grefe began to pile up points.

Tarjan fell out of contention with a loss to Mednis, but Grefe launched an astonishing streak that began with victories over Bisguier, Mednis and Larry Gilden of Washington, D.C. For a while Kavalek managed to keep pace with him but dropped back after agreeing to a draw with Browne. The former Australian had already had the "bye"—that is, a free day created by the withdrawal of Lombardy—so his score was actually better than it appeared at first. If he could win on the days that Grefe and Kavalek had their byes he would be just a half game behind the leaders. And he could pick up ground if he were to beat Grefe in their head-to-head meeting. But that came in Round 7 with an unlucky result for Browne:

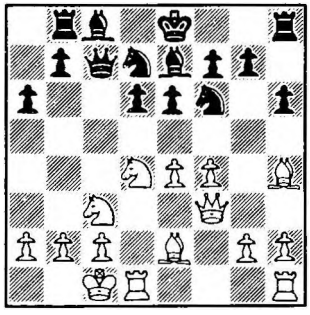
Sicilian Defense
***white* Grefe, *black* Browne**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-Q4 P×P, 4 N×P N-KB3,

5 N–QB3 P–QR3, 6 B–N5 P–K3, 7 P–B4 P–R3, 8 B–R4 B–K2, 9 Q–B3 QN–Q2, 10 0–0–0 Q–B2, 11 B–K2!

The Najdorf Sicilian, characterized by 5 ... P–QR3, was the chief weapon of Browne, as well as Grefe and several other of the young masters at the time. Systems of defense were still being worked out after the complex 6 B–N5 and this game was an important step in building up the variation's theory. A year later against the same opponent Browne found a different order of moves—7 ... B–K2, 8 Q–B3 Q–B2, 9 0–0–0 QN–Q2—after which the attempt to transpose into the text position with 10 B–K2 is not considered sufficiently sharp. Instead, in that 1974 game Grefe played 10 B–Q3 and Browne obtained a favorable version of the El Paso game with 10 ... P–R3! so that he could meet 11 B–R4 with 11 ... P–KN4!, 12 P × P N–K4, 13 Q–K2 N(3)–N5, 14 N–B3 P × P, 15 B × P B × B*ch*, 16 N × B Q–B4!

11 ... QR–N1



After 11 ... QR–N1

Grefe–Browne, 1973

With the White bishop on K2 the 11 ... P–KN4 idea is less successful in view of White's control of his KN4. Instead, Browne prepares for ... P–QN4 which would have led to extreme sharpness if played immediately: 11 ... P–QN4, 12 P–K5 B–N2, 13 P × N!? B × Q, 14 B × B.

12 Q–N3 R–N1, 13 KR–B1! P–KN4?

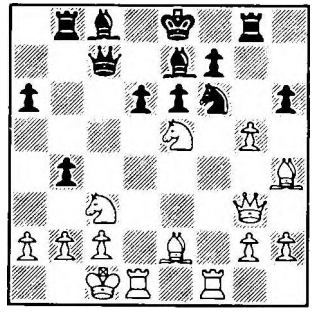
Grefe's piece placement is quite effective in preparing P–K5 and exploiting ... P–KN4. After 13 ... P–QN4, for example, White has a dangerous attack with 14 P–B5 P–K4, 15 N–K6!? or simply 14 N × KP! P × N, 15 Q–N6*ch* K–Q1, 16 P–K5! P × P, 17 P–B5. It stands to reason that Black should not be able to continue for long with moves such as ... R–QN1 and ... R–KN1.

14 P × P N–K4, 15 N–B3!

This strong move challenges the K5 square, upon whose control Black has staked his middlegame chances. The knight move also enables Grefe to meet 15 ... P × P with 16 N × P since the pinning retreat 16 ... N–R2 would be refuted by 17 N × KP! (17 ... R × Q, 18 N × Q*ch*; 17 ... P × N, 18 Q × R*ch*).

15 ... P–QN4?, 16 N × N P–N5

This apparently was Black's idea—to force White on the defensive a bit. With his queenside knight in retreat White would be less organized for a tactical shot. Browne had probably gotten a hint of the potential dangers already by calculating 16 ... P × N, 17 P × N! R × Q, 18 P × B R–N4 which would lose to 19 B–R5!!



After 16 ... P–N5

Grefe–Browne, 1973

17 N × P!!

There are several cute points to this, among them 17 ... K × N, 18 P × N! R × Q, 19 P × B*ch* K–N2 after which the heroic KP performs its final duty by turning into a forking knight.

17 ... P × N, 18 P × N!

The win becomes clear within a few moves as Black will have to sacrifice the queen to avert mate.

18 ... R × Q, 19 P × B R–KN4

Black cannot permit 20 N × P*ch* K–Q2, 21 P–K8(Q)*ch*. Now White gets all the material back with interest.

20 B × R P × B, 21 N × P*ch* and Black resigns.

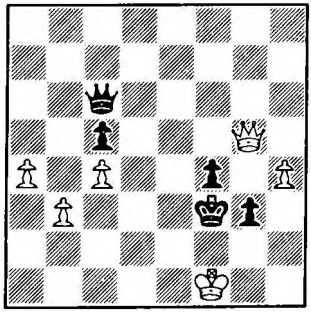
The queen goes after 21 ... K × P, 22 R–B7*ch* but the worst part of it is 22 ... K–Q1, 23 N × B*ch*! K × N, 24 B × P*ch*.

While this was going on it took Kavalek 100 moves to defeat Donald Byrne, then competing in his last championship, to stay even with the surprising Grefe. The guru's disciple, who followed Kavalek in the tournament pairing draw, was to play all of Kavalek's opponent's the round after the grandmaster did. This gave Grefe a clear idea of what he needed to match the older man's record. He needed to beat Byrne and he did the very next day while Tarjan held Kavalek to a draw. Grefe could then afford a draw with Tarjan—and they did in a sprightly Round 9 Dragon.

This meant that the lowest-rated player in the tournament had scored eight points out of nine, including six wins in a row between his draws with Kane and Tarjan. This streak, the most extraordinary since Fischer, came to an end in a dubious Queens' Gambit Declined when the two leaders met in Round 10. Grefe threw himself into a highly irregular—and out of character—kingside attack and was repulsed by Kavalek's cool defense. The dark horse youngster from Hoboken still had a technical half-point lead but he was due for the bye the next day while Kavalek, who already had the bye, faced Evans.

Once again Kavalek could only draw with a fellow grandmaster with the black pieces and he went into the final two rounds tied with Grefe. Both men drew cautiously the next day, Kavalek in 12 moves with Benko, Grefe in 17 with Evans. The fate of first prize depended on the final round pairings: Kavalek was Black against the unheralded Andrew Karklins of Chicago while Grefe, also Black, faced Benko.

But Benko, apparently thinking he would be offered another early draw, let Grefe build up a commanding attacking formation. By adjournment time the young master's advantage was obvious and he crashed through to force resignation on the 58th move. Kavalek, meanwhile, was adjourning a favorable if difficult queen-and-pawn ending.



Karklins–Kavalek, 1973
After 52 K–B1

22nd U.S. Championship, El Paso, Sept. 9–27, 1973

	K	G	B	T	E	B	K	M	B	G	M	B	K	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–2. Kavalek	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	7	5	0	9½–2½
1–2. Grefe	0	X	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	8	3	1	9½–2½
3. Browne	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	1	8½–3½
4. Tarjan	½	½	½	X	1	½	1	0	1	1	½	½	½	4	7	1	7½–4½
5–6. Evans	½	½	½	0	X	½	0	½	1	1	½	½	1	3	7	2	6½–4½
5–6. Benko	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	2	9	1	6½–5½
7. Karklins	0	0	½	0	1	½	X	½	½	0	1	1	1	4	4	4	6–6
8. Mednis	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	X	½	0	½	1	1	3	5	4	5½–6½
9. Bisguier	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	2	6	4	5–7
10. Gilden	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	1	½	X	0	½	½	2	4	6	4–8
11. Martz	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	1	X	½	½	1	5	6	3½–8½
12–13. D. Byrne	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	X	0	0	6	6	3–9
12–13. Kane	0	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	0	1	4	7	3–9

Kavalek (Black) has the better placed king and, after his next move, the more centrally posted queen. Both are significant factors in this kind of ending, but the most important is usually the presence of a passed pawn.

52 ... Q–K5

Karklins, who had earlier defeated Evans and Byrne in dynamic attacking positions, cannot wait for Black to push his pawns. His only resource is a series of checks, and with only a few minutes left he plays:

53 Q–R5*ch* K–K6, 54 Q–K2*ch* K–Q5

Now Karklins has two good checks to consider as well as the obvious exchange of queens. It's not hard for a master to see that 55 Q–N2*ch* K–Q6, 56 Q–N1*ch* K–K6 is a perpetual check (57 Q–B1*ch* K–B6, 58 Q–Q1*ch* etc.). The same goes for 55 Q–Q2*ch* because 55 ... Q–Q6*ch* would lead to a trade of queens and a race of passed pawns in which White has the fastest horse. (Black would, however, manage to draw anyway after 56 Q × Q*ch* K × Q, 57 P–QR5 P–B6, 58 P–R6 P–N7*ch*, 59 K–B2 P–N8(Q)*ch*!, 60 K × Q K–K7, 61 P–R7 P–B7*ch*.)

Either way, a draw gives Grefe the title. But ...

55 Q × Q*ch*?? K × Q, 56 P–QR5

Karklins' choice at move 55 permitted him to make the time control with this move. Now he expected to win since Black's king is too far away to force the promotion of a Black pawn before White makes a queen of his own. But ...

56 ... K–B6! and White resigned.

The king *is* close enough to mate (after 57 P–R6 P–N7*ch*, 58 K–N1 K–N6, 59 P–R7 P–B6, 60 P–R8(Q) P–B7).

An incredible finish, and, once again, co-champions.

1974: Too Much Browne

The success of Grefe, Tarjan and Browne among other young masters living on the West Coast tended to overshadow the chess renaissance that

was going on in Chicago during the early 1970s. The young players in that area—Martz, DeFotis, Karklins and Craig Chellstorp—were briefly among the most talented in the country. (Briefly, because DeFotis soon gave up chess for contract bridge and Chellstorp, a junior with nearly as much promise, gave it up for backgammon.) But at the time Chicago seemed to be the center of national chess activity having hosted the 21st championship playoff, the 1973 U.S. Open and a moderately strong international tournament—all within ten months. And in July 1974, with temperatures approaching El Paso's heights of a year before, a slightly weaker championship field assembled in the historic LaSalle Hotel in the Loop area for the 23rd championship.

The tournament was without Robert Byrne again and also minus Kavalek. But Reshevsky and Evans were expected to lead the older generation in a comeback fight against Grefe-Tarjan-Browne junior stars. As it turned out, the older players avenged several of their losses in El Paso. But in the end it was Browne's year and the first (and easiest) of his three successive championship victories.

The first round saw what promised to be an exciting pairing—Grefe vs. Browne, a repeat of the most dramatic meeting of the El Paso tournament. But the promise went largely unfulfilled. Browne had improved on his Najdorf Sicilian and quickly counterattacked; no strange ... R-KN1 and ... R-QN1 moves this year. Just as the position became sharp Grefe seemed to run out of the energy that had kept him in first place in El Paso and his position seemed to contract measurably with each move until adjournment. In the sealed move position he had a rook, bishop and single pawn against Browne's rook, active knight and two pawns. Four days passed before it could be played out and by then Browne had worked the winning line out to arithmetic certainty. Grefe, somewhat surprisingly, resigned without asking for proof.

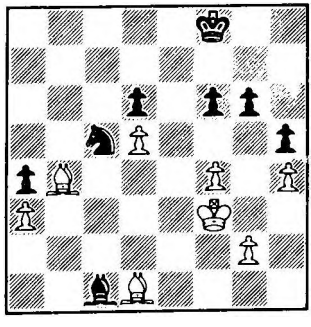
And in the second round Browne won effortlessly over Ken Rogoff, his successor as U.S. Junior Champion and one of three newcomers in the tournament. Browne, at 25, was technically a member of the younger generation, but at the same time, had been a grandmaster for five years. There was developing a *new*, less experienced generation and they would regard him as almost an oldtimer, a veteran of international play. In 1973 the veterans had taken a pounding in several games in El Paso (Karklins-*Evans*, Tarjan-*Evans*, *Bisguier*-Grefe, *Bisguier*-Tarjan, *Benko*-Grefe, etc.). But this year the veterans—Browne included—were getting revenge.

Evans demonstrated this early with victories over Rogoff, Karklins and an athletic young southern Californian named Kim Commons. Commons could give a "simultaneous tennis exhibition" as well

as chess exhibition—and at a later U.S. championship defeated a team of Robert Byrne and Lubosh Kavalek singlehandedly. But this year, his first in the championship, Commons was no match for the veterans, such as Benko, who was having one of his better years. The Hungarian émigré—who now divided the year between his homes in Budapest and New Jersey—went through the 23rd championship undefeated, drawing most of his games in 20 moves and waiting for the kind of endgame or positional middlegame in which he could beat anyone. Pal was no threat to Browne but he could sneak his way into second or third place.

The crisis of the tournament came in Round 5. Browne faced Reshevsky with Black, but had something else to worry about. In the previous round, he had adjourned an ending with a bad bishop against Tony Saidy's good knight, with several pawns for each side. Browne told anyone who asked that the game was an easy draw, while Saidy claimed he had good winning chances. The truth seemed somewhere in between—a difficult, problematic position that was not a win, but could be lost. A loss would drop Browne to 3½–1½ just ahead of Reshevsky, Evans and Bisguier, who stood at 2½–1½ with an extra game to play.

So, when Browne sat down with the tournament's oldest competitor he played the percentages and offered a draw about the 15th move. Reshevsky smiled to himself and declined. By the 20th move he had the hint of an endgame advantage because of his two bishops, which opposed Browne's bishop and knight. The four rooks came off within five moves and suddenly Browne was being pressed hard. All Sammy needed was a clear road for his king and he would penetrate the shell that protected Browne's vulnerable pawns. Both men were long experienced in time pressure and inevitably a complex position such as this arose with seconds left on each clock and five moves to play.



Reshevsky-Browne, 1974
After 35 ... P × P(B3)

Browne has defended carefully and he only has to worry about a pawn break with P–N4. All the endings with bishops-of-opposite color (36 B × N) should be drawn even if White wins a pawn. So:

36 P–N4 P × P*ch*!, 37 K × P P–B4*ch*!

Reshevsky was all set to play 38 P–B5!, which would have forced the creation of a winning passed pawn.

38 K–N5??

Consistent, in fact the only consistent move in the position—but also disastrous. When you're looking for points of penetration in the endgame, one thing you rarely consider is checkmate.

38 ... K–N2!

Black threatens 39 ... N–K5 *mate* as well as ... B–N7–B3 *mate* (e.g. 39 B × N B–N7!).

39 B–B3*ch* K–R2, 40 B–B2 N–K5*ch*!, 41 B × N P × B

And with the time battle over, Reshevsky played **42 B–N4** but then he, as **White, resigned** the adjourned position in the face of 42 ... P–K6, followed by ... B–Q7 and ... P–K7.

After this scare Browne managed to hold the draw against Saidy in their adjourned game. That ending also involved a difficult time-trouble battle, but it ended with Browne's claiming a draw when the position had been repeated three times. The then-current international rule held that his clock must run while his claim was evaluated and, if the claim was rejected, he might forfeit. "I gotta know now," he shouted to assistant tournament director Tim Redman, "Is it a draw or isn't it?"

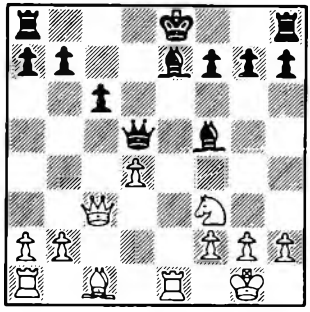
It was. And that virtually clinched first prize. Browne won three more games and allowed scattered draws in the final two weeks while Evans, his only close rival, could only win one more game. The rest of the tournament is of interest perhaps only because of one exceptional game, a game with a story:

The day before Arthur Bisguier was to play Browne he agonized over a choice of opening. Andy Soltis, then playing in his first championship, suggested the Petrov's Defense, mentioning a tricky but untested pawn sacrifice in the popular 3 P–Q4 line that Rogoff and he had analyzed some years before. The analysis eventually was tested, and vin-

dicated, when Bent Larsen used it to defeat then-world champion Anatoly Karpov in 1980. Bisguier was interested in the sacrifice but was cautioned to be sure he had something prepared for the older variations beginning with 3 N × P. "Oh, I know that stuff," Bisguier said.

Petrov Defense
white **Browne,** ***black*** **Bisguier**

1 P-K4 P-K4, 2 N-KB3 N-KB3, 3 N × P!! P-Q3, 4 N-KB3 N × P, 5 P-Q4 P-Q4, 6 B-Q3 B-K2, 7 0-0 N-QB3, 8 P-B4 N-N5, 9 P × P N × B, 10 Q × N Q × P, 11 R-K1 B-KB4, 12 N-B3 N × N, 13 Q × N P-QB3



After 13 ... P-QB3

Browne-Bisguier, 1974

"Bisguier was yawning out the moves," Browne recalled later. But here Walter sank into deep thought—and the other players began to wonder about him. Browne was already known for his penchant of insisting on finding things for himself rather than trusting the judgment of chess theory. But here he was thinking furiously about a position that was known to be rather quiet and routine and had been considered roughly balanced for some 30 years.

Ten minutes went by, then twenty, then thirty. Some of the older palyers, gathered at the back of the tournament hall, began to snicker about Browne's insistance on proving to himself there was something new. "He has to calculate everything," one grandmaster said with derision. "It's as if this position has never occured before. It's like he's looking for a forced win!"

14 B-R6!!

Played after 40 minutes' thought and leading, sure enough, to a virtually forced win. Later, it was revealed by Zuckerman that his longtime friend,

23rd U.S. Championship, Chicago, July 13–Aug. 1, 1974

	B	B	E	S	R	G	B	R	W	Z	S	C	K	G	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Browne	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	6	7	0	9½–3½
2–3. Benko	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	3	10	0	8–5
2–3. Evans	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	4	8	1	8–5
4. Saidy	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	3	9	1	7½–5½
5–8. Reshevsky	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	1	0	½	½	0	1	1	4	6	3	7–6
5–8. Grefe	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	3	8	2	7–6
5–8. Bisguier	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	2	10	1	7–6
5–8. Rogoff	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	4	6	3	7–6
9. N. Weinstein	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	X	½	½	0	0	1	2	8	3	6–7
10–11. Zuckerman	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	0	1	0	1	9	3	5½–7½
10–11. Soltis	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	9	3	5½–7½
12. Commons	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	1	1	0	X	1	0	4	2	7	5–8
13. Karklins	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	0	X	1	2	5	6	4½–8½
14. Gilden	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	X	3	1	9	3½–9½

the forgotten Fischer, had discovered 14 B–R6!! several years before but had never gotten a chance to play it. The move dramatically changes the position since there is no easy defense to B × NP, e.g. 14 ... P × B, 15 R–K5 Q–Q2, 16 QR–K1 B–K3, 17 P–Q5 and wins because of lines such as 17 ... P × P, 18 R × B! P × R, 19 Q × R*ch* B–B1, 20 Q–B6 B–K2, 21 R × P.

Bisguier had his turn to think, and after an hour he could find nothing better than the timid 14 ... R–KN1. There followed.

14 ... R–KN1, 15 R–K5 Q–Q2, 16 QR–K1 B–K3, 17 N–N5!

After this the position becomes clear. All the simplifications (17 ... B–B3, 18 N × B B × R, 19 N–B5 or 17 ... P × B, 18 N × B P × N, 19 R × P R–N2, 20 P–Q5! K–B1, 21 Q × R*ch*! K × Q, 22 R × B*ch*) are bad, and Bisguier must walk willingly into an ending that, even with his renowned drawing skill, was lost:

17 ... 0–0–0, 18 N × BP! B × N, 19 R × B Q × P, 20 R × B! Q × Q, 21 P × Q P × B, 22 R–N1! R–N4, 23 P–KR4 R–N4, 24 R × R P × R, 25 R × RP R–Q8*ch*, 26 K–R2 R–Q7, 27 R × RP R × RP, 28 P–R5 R × P, 29 R–R8*ch* K–B2, 30 P–R6 K–N3, 31 K–R3 P–R4, 32 P–N4 P–N5, 33 P × P P × P, 34 R–K8 R–B8, 35 K–N2 R–B3, 36 P–N5 R–N3, 37 P–R7 R × P*ch*, 38 K–B3 R–KR4, 39 P–R8(Q) R × Q, 40 R × R and Black resigns.

"I feel like an innocent victim," said Bisguier, reflecting on his faith in the "book."

By the 11th round Browne had 8½ points, a score comparable to one of Fischer's winning margins and one that was just as good as the furious Kavalek–Grefe pace of the previous year. Browne was 1½ points ahead of the field then and could afford to take quick draws on the last two days. This policy had another benefit: while everyone else was waiting around late in the final round to see Benko wear down Evans in the battle for second place, Browne had left early to see a Bruce Lee Kung Fu movie.

1975: Encore

Had Chicago been a fluke? Was Browne that good? Opinion was sharply divided over his remarkable success. One school of thought felt his 1974 result was the culmination of five years' improvement. Another

saw it as a temporary surge, such as Grefe's 9½–2½ score in 1973 (which was followed by a 7–6 result in 1974 at a somewhat weaker tournament). Also, something of a hex had built up over the previous decade: No one had repeated as champion since Fischer.

The 24th championship was to be another zonal tournament and would therefore attract any American who harbored ambitions for the world title. Byrne and Kavalek were expected, as well as many of the talented youngsters such as Tarjan (who had been absent in Chicago) and veterans such as Reshevsky. Moreover, the tone seemed sharper in 1975—even though the scoretable didn't show it. The percentage of draws in the championship had been on the rise for some time and it crested this year.

Year	*Percentage of Draws*
1936	28.3
1946	26.5
1954 and 1957–58	21.9
1968	40.9
1973	44.3
1974	53.9
1975	63.7

Yet while nearly two out of three games were ending in draws, it seemed dangerous to take too many of them. Benko, for example, thrived in Chicago by playing out only the positions he considered winnable. He liquidated the other middle games with a handshake. Benko finished up in Chicago with three wins, using his consummate endgame skill, and shared second place. But a year later in Oberlin College—where a score of plus-3 would have been good enough to get him into the 1976 interzonals, the situation was quite different. Benko again drew 10 games but lost the other three and finished dead last.

Rogoff also noticed the difference: In the previous year, he said, the older players had been content to draw with one another and work hard only against the kids. This year the kids would be ready to break this pattern by winning some games from the older grandmasters, and thereby force the GMs to play for wins against each other.

For his own part Browne didn't seem to see any difference. He complained about poor lighting in the tournament hall—a complaint he would revive in 1977 and, unfortunately, again in 1978. But, he said after failing to win sympathy from his colleagues, "Since most of the players didn't come to play chess, they certainly didn't care about lighting." Still, the light didn't seem to affect him as he drew blood with a fine victory over Mednis in Round 2 and additional revenge from Grefe in

Round 3. Quickly, he was ahead of Byrne and Kavalek, who began unexpectedly slowly.

In fact, the surprise contenders in the early rounds were Browne, Rogoff and Dr. Milan Vukcevich, a distinguished scientist who lived in a nearby Cleveland suburb. Vukcevich's work, which had earned him a nomination for a Nobel Prize, had kept him from tournament play for several years but when he got to the board he took the game very seriously indeed, preparing his openings days in advance and analyzing adjournment with the same precision and inspiration that made him a recognized problem composer. His victories over Tarjan and Grefe showed that he would not go away.

In Round 7 the shape of the tournament began to come into focus as Rogoff, trotting out his carefully prepared Caro-Kann Defense, scored a major upset over Kavalek. Vukcevich kept pace by defeating John Peters III, a Massachusetts-educated convert to the California way of life. The third leader would come from this game:

Sicilian Defense
***white* R. Byrne, *black* Browne**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N-KB3, 5 N-QB3 P-QR3, 6 B-K3 P-K3, 7 B-K2 QN-Q2, 8 P-KN4!?

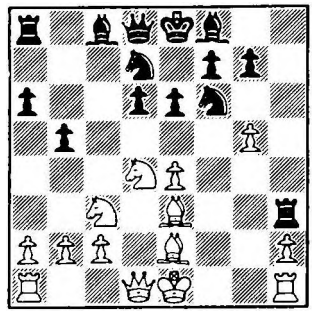
Up to White's last move the opening had followed Mednis–Browne from the first round. Mednis had sought to maintain rigid control over the center with 8 P-QR4, which denies the flanking attack ... P-QN4-5. But the extra precaution gave Black time to obtain the necessary active counterplay with 8 ... P-QN3, 9 P-B4 B-N2, 10 B-B3 R-B1!, 11 0-0 R × N!?, 12 P × R N × P, 13 N-K2 Q-B2, 14 Q-K1 P-Q4.

Byrne's choice, 8 P-KN4, may allow White to force matters at his own speed. Black must take time to stop P-N5 if he wants to maintain pressure on the KP and the center.

8 ... P-R3!?, 9 P-B4 P-QN4

Here White would rather not play 10 P-N5 because it will turn over control of his K5 square to Black. But if he takes time out for P-QR3 then Browne will have the opportunity to play 10 ... B-N2 and 11 ... R-B1 as he did against Mednis.

10 P-N5 P × P, 11 P × P R-R6!?!



After 11 ... R–R6

R. Byrne–Browne, 1975

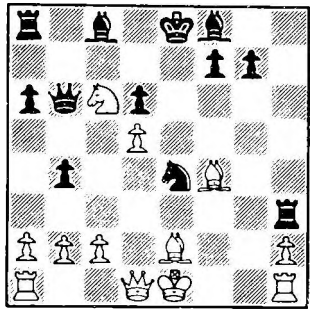
"The Black kingside should have come apart after 12 P–N6," Byrne later wrote. "However, this terrific countermeasure not only brought the attack to a screeching halt, but set Black up a winning position." Browne later added some points of his own, noting variations such as 12 P × N R × B, 13 P × P Q–R5*ch*, 14 K–Q2 B × P! (15 K × R B–R3*ch*, 16 K–B3 Q–R6*ch* with a winning attack), or 12 Q–Q2 P–N5! He also dismissed 12 B–B2 with the move 12 ... R × N but therein lies a story: Several months later a *Chess Life* reader questioned the last line and pointed out to columnist Larry Evans the possibility of 12 B–B2 R × N, 13 P × N R–KR6, 14 N × KP. After Evans praised the analysis, Browne took issue with it. Walter insisted that Black was winning all along and that 11 ... R–R6 deserved the two exclamation points of praise that he had awarded to it when he annotated the game. Evans tried to respond to Browne's analysis in print but, he later claimed, was prevented from doing so by *Chess Life*'s editor.

The upshot of all this? A few months later, after the controversy had blown over, Browne found himself on the Black side of the diagrammed position once more, this time at the Interzonal tournament in Biel, Switzerland. His opponent, a Russian named Vitaly Tseshkovsky, was waiting for 11 ... R–R6 and he continued 12 B–B2 R × N, 13 P × N! R–R6?!, 14 N × KP! Q–R4*ch* (14 ... P × N, 15 B–R5*ch* mates), 15 P–B3 P × N, 16 P × P B × P, 17 Q × P and White's ferocious attack eventually broke through.

12 B–KB4? P–N5

Now Black is in the driver's seat—especially after 13 P × N Q × P! (not 13 ... P × N, 14 N × KP!), 14 0–0 P × N, 15 B–N4 Q–N3, 16 B–N3 R × B*ch*!, 17 P × R P × P.

13 N–Q5! P × N, 14 P × N N × P, 15 N–B6 Q–N3, 16 P × P N–K5



After 16 ... N-K5

R. Byrne-Browne, 1975

White can still make a fight of this double-edged position with 17 KR-B1. But instead, Byrne erred with:

17 Q-Q4?

And Black achieved a clearly superior endgame that was capped by White's loss of a rook on a blunder:

17 ... Q × Q, 18 N × Q P-N4!, 19 B-QB1 B-KN2, 20 N-B6 N-N6, 21 R-KN1 N × B, 22 R × P?? N-Q5, 23 R × B N × P*ch*, 24 K-Q1 N × R, 25 R-N8*ch* K-Q2, 26 R-B8 R-Q6*ch*, 27 B-Q2 R × P, 28 N × P R-KB4, 29 B-B3 P-R4, 30 N-Q3 P-R5 and White resigns.

Byrne never recovered from this, and in the following round another leader fell when Vukcevich lost a marathon 102-move game to Mednis. Reshevsky managed to escape from a bad adjournment with Byrne the following day but the strain of overnight analysis seemed to take all the reserve energy from the veteran. In the 11th round he was routed by Vukcevich. Meanwhile Rogoff's Caro-Kann was neutralized by Lombardy who nearly forfeited on the clock for the fourth time in the tournament, but beat it this time and won. One by one, each of Browne's rivals were eliminating one another.

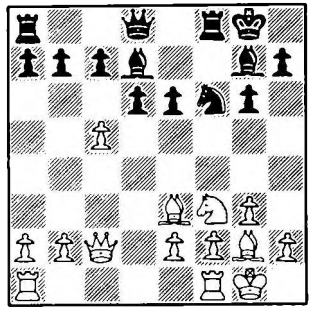
The last chance of stopping the reigning champion occured when Benko surprised him in the first hour of Round 11:

King's Indian Defense
***white* Benko, *black* Browne**

1 N-KB3 N-KB3, 2 P-KN3 P-KN3, 3 B-N2 B-N2, 4 0-0 0-0, 5 P-B4 P-Q3, 6 P-Q4 QN-Q2, 7 P-Q5!? P-K4, 8 P × P *e.p.*

This position had probably never occured before and may never again. There is nothing to recommend White's dissolution of his center – except to create a wholly new opening position. Browne was on uncertain ground and within a few moves he found himself in trouble.

8 ... P × P, 9 N-B3 N-B4, 10 B-K3 N(3)-K5, 11 N × N N × N, 12 Q-B2 N-B3, 13 P-B5! B-Q2



After 13 ... B-Q2

Benko–Browne, 1975

Now with 14 KR-Q1 White has excellent prospects due to 14 ... B-B3, 15 P × P P × P, 16 B-B5. But Benko played a clumsy move:

14 Q-N3? N-Q4!

And here Benko realized he had erred. He couldn't play 15 B-Q4, the move he had counted on, because of 15 ... R × N! which attacks the queen and gains time for 16 ... B × B. So...

15 N-N5 R-B4!

This second strong move secures a favorable trade of Black's rook for two minor pieces. Even then the position was unclear but, as Benko explained, "I got so upset after my blunder that I just couldn't play chess." He eventually forfeited on time in a lost position.

Meanwhile, Rogoff was emerging as the surprise of the tournament. Despite the loss to Lombardy he had scored impressive wins over both Peters and Kavalek. In such a closely-matched field of masters a few victories were all that were needed to earn a trip to the interzonal. Browne had already secured first prize a day before the final round when he played ahead of schedule and drew quickly with Commons. The second prize, and interzonal invitation, depended on two pairings. If Rogoff

were to lose with Black to Bisguier then Reshevsky, the closest to him, could tie the young Yale student by defeating a now-demoralized Benko.

What happened next did not reflect honorably on the character of U.S. championship participants. In fact, it recalled the long-forgotten Grundy incident of the 5th American Chess Congress. According to Reshevsky, on the night before the final round, he approached Benko with a proposition: If we see that Rogoff is drawing or winning against Bisguier tomorrow, he said, there's no point in our exerting ourselves. We might as well draw because a win means nothing to either of us. But if Rogoff loses, Reshevsky went on, then I'll play to win because I can force a playoff for the Biel, Switzerland, interzonal spot by tying him for second place.

This in itself is against international chess etiquette. But Reshevsky added another element: If he managed to get into the interzonal, Reshevsky said he would chose Benko as his second there and there would be a nice salary for that. (According to Benko, the question of a last-round draw came up in the middle of the tournament and he indicated his willingness to draw.)

In any event, there was no repeat of "Grundy" the next day. Rogoff drew quickly, thereby clinching the trip to Biel and also allowing Bisguier to establish a record by drawing all 13 of his games in the Championship. Seeing this, Reshevsky indicated to Benko that it was time to draw as they had agreed. But Benko refused, pointing out that he had the better position and, more important, he would finish a humiliating last in the tournament if he only drew. "I must win to get out of last place," he told Reshevsky.

Reshevsky was outraged; he complained to tournament director Tim Redman that his opponent was not living up to an highly irregular agreement and, when he got no help from that quarter, began angrily repeating his draw offer at the table to Benko. He even tried enlisting the help of bystander Bisguier to convince Benko. All this served only to upset Reshevsky enough to throw away a pawn, but he managed to hold the position for a draw when play resumed the next day. Benko says he was too upset to win and the incident was soon forgotten.

1977: Hat Trick

The 25th championship opened more than two years and fewer than 20 miles from the 24th but the atmosphere had altered drastically. The rosy enthusiasm of the period immediately following Bobby

24th U.S. Championship, Oberlin, June 7–26, 1975

	B	R	V	B	R	L	B	T	C	K	P	M	G	B	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Browne	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	4	9	0	8½–4½
2. Rogoff	½	X	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	4	8	1	8–5
3. Vukcevich	½	½	X	½	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	0	1	½	4	7	2	7½–5½
4–5. R. Byrne	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	2	10	1	7–6
4–5. Reshevsky	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	2	10	1	7–6
6–9. Lombardy	½	1	1	½	½	X	½	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	3	7	3	6½–6½
6–9. Bisguier	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	13	0	6½–6½
6–9. Tarjan	½	½	0	0	½	1	½	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	3	7	3	6½–6½
6–9. Commons	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	X	½	1	0	1	1	3	7	3	6½–6½
10–13. Kavalek	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	½	½	0	11	2	5½–7½
10–13. Peters	½	0	0	½	0	1	½	1	0	1	X	½	0	½	3	5	5	5½–7½
10–13. Mednis	0	0	1	0	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	X	½	½	2	7	4	5½–7½
10–13. Grefe	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	1	½	X	1	3	5	5	5½–7½
14. Benko	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	X	0	10	3	5–8

Fischer's greatest successes had evaporated. In place was a divisiveness in the chess community, prompted by the realization that the good times were over. There was no championship in 1976 and there was some question among USCF officials as to whether one was needed in 1977. In the end, the players assembled in another Cleveland suburb, Mentor, Ohio, in October for a strained and strangely uninteresting tournament.

The masters and grandmasters who populated championships had quarreled with organizers before—although few of the 1977 contestants had ever heard of the Association of American Chess Masters and the controversy of 1946. This time the specific issue that divided the men who played the game from those who organized it was a fairly obscure one. Larry Evans' column in *Chess Life* had been dropped because of dissatisfaction with its content. But Evans, Lombardy and several other masters seized upon the issue to call for creation of a Professional Chess Association, which would unite all professional players in a quest for better living and playing conditions. They wanted higher prize funds in major tournaments, fewer competitions restricted to nonmasters and a means of appealing what they called arbitrary decisions by the USCF. They even talked about pensions for veteran players—financed by a tax imposed on all tournament players in the country.

Within a few years Evans got back into *Chess Life*, and the PCA, having failed to win a widespread following among masters, became no more than a letterhead organization. But in the fall of 1977 it was very much a subject of concern and the controversy peaked when Evans, Lombardy and others sympathetic to the PCA aims refused championship invitations—apparently because the grandmasters were not offered a $700 appearance fee. Also, the tournament was not a zonal and so was missing a few of the stronger GMs, such as Kavalek, and, because of the rating system which was used to determine invitations, also lost some of the lower-rated GMs, such as Benko and Bisguier. Finally, Rogoff, the surprise of the 24th championship, was busy studying for a doctorate in economics and was unavailable.

In only one area had the tournament strength been improved, and this was in the arrival of the first Russian émigrés. Leonid Shamkovich, who came by way of Israel and Canada, and Anatoly Lein, a close friend of Shamkovich's from Moscow, were both established—but second-rank—grandmasters in their own country and therefore expendable. They took advantage of the newly-eased Soviet emigration policies and suddenly became among the very best players in the United States. In their first two years in America they lived in the same New York apartment and won virtually every Swiss System event they entered. The Russians could not be ignored.

But to defending champion Browne, the outcome was already determined. One day midway throughout the tournament he explained to a local reporter that the other players were not so much motivated by the thought of winning the championship—because they knew he was too good—but rather they had come to Mentor for the opportunity to play Browne. This comment didn't endear Walter to the other players, and neither did his complaints about the tournament hall lighting. Still, when Browne was required to produce, he did:

Dutch Defense
***white* Browne, *black* Byrne**

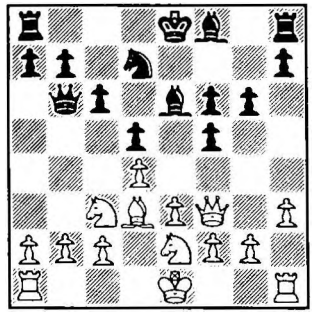
1 P-Q4!

Browne had been playing 1 P-K4 since his early Manhattan Chess Club days. Now he was broadening his repertoire. À la Fischer?

1 ... P-KB4, 2 N-QB3!? N-KB3, 3 B-N5 P-Q4

White's unusual treatment of the opening, especially the avoidance of P-QB4, presents Black with difficult questions to answer. To avoid 3 ... P-K3, 4 P-K4! he must permit his kingside pawns to be disrupted and his QB locked in by immobile pawns at Q4 and KB4.

4 B × N KP × B, 5 P-K3 B-K3, 6 B-Q3 P-KN3, 7 Q-B3 P-B3, 8 KN-K2 N-Q2, 9 P-KR3! Q-N3?!



After 9 ... Q-N3

Browne–R. Byrne, 1977

10 P-KN4! Q × P?

Both sides appreciate that White can obtain a strong initiative with P-KN4. This stroke cannot be stopped (9 ... P-KR4, 10 P-KN4 RP × P, 11 RP × P P × P, 12 B × P*ch* and White invades on the white squares). But Byrne's attempt to distract Browne's attention with a queen raid fails

miserably. "I couldn't believe my eyes," said Browne later. "Instead, 10 ... P × P, 11 P × P B–B2 doesn't give White very much."

11 R–QN1 Q–R6, 12 P × P B–B2, 13 R × P B–N5

Because of Browne's complaints about the lighting, this game was played in a separate hotel room and, as with his previous experience (vs. Fischer in 1964) in a separate room, Byrne finds himself up against a wall very quickly. Apparently he thought White could not permit the capture on QN2 because of the subsequent 13 ... B–N5. But after 14 0–0! White can regain material with 14 ... B × N, 15 R–N3 and retain a huge lead.

14 0–0! 0–0–0, 15 R × B!

This is better than 15 B–R6, the move Byrne expected and which would have been refuted by 15 ... B × N, 16 Q–N3 N–K4!!

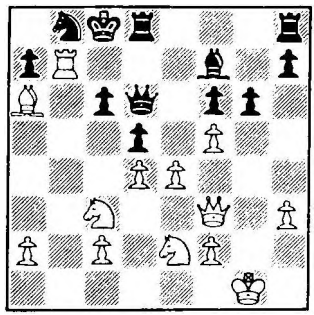
15 ... Q × R, 16 B–R6*ch* K–B2, 17 R–N1 Q–Q3

Black cannot permit a check on the KN3–QB7 diagonal or R–N7*ch* followed by a really destructive discovered check. But he can permit discovered checks that do nothing more than repeat moves, and Browne now uses them to gain time on his clock.

18 R–N7*ch* K–B1, 19 R–N3*ch* K–B2, 20 R–N7*ch* K–B1, 21 P–K4!

This fine stroke—played after spending half of his last remaining hour—permits the White queen or knight to join the mating attack. The first threats are 22 P × P or 22 N–N5! followed by Q–B3(*ch*).

21 ... N–N1



After 21 ... N–N1

Browne–R. Byrne, 1977

22 N–N5!! P × N, 23 Q–B3*ch* N–B3

There was bound to be a murderous discovered check in some key

variation. Here, for example, it was 23 ... Q–B3, 24 R × N*ch* which would have ended the game following 24 ... K–B2!, 25 R–N7*ch* K–Q3, 26 P–K5*ch*! Browne finishes off in excellent fashion.

24 P–K5! Q–B2

The attack must win — despite Black's extra rook — after 24 ... B × P, 25 QP × P P–Q5, 26 N × P.

25 P–K6!! and Black resigns.

The final threat was 26 R × NP*ch* and it was fatal because Q2 had been removed as an escape route. After 25 ... R–Q3, 26 R × Q*ch* K × R, 27 P × B or 25 ... Q × R, 26 Q × N*ch*! Black's plight would have been obvious even without the extra lighting the winner said he needed.

A victory such as this one over his most serious rival, perhaps his only serious rival in this championship, could have convinced Browne that the tournament was his. He breezed ahead with a 2½–½ start thanks to a scrambled schedule — games had to be reset because of Reshevsky's religious observances — that gave Browne three whites in his first three games. For a time Lein and Shamkovich were right behind the champion, as was Larry Christiansen, America's newest grandmaster and, at 21, one of the world's youngest. But when Shamkovich adjourned a lost position with Browne in Round 5 the leader had built up a huge margin with the tournament hardly a third of the way completed.

Browne came crashing down to earth in Round 6 when a doubtful rook sacrifice by Tarjan proved too much to handle. Walter had to resign on the 50th move, his first loss in more than 35 championship games since the Grefe miniature in 1973. The defeat by Tarjan seemed to upset the champion more than it should. The next day he got no advantage at all with the White pieces against Peters and on the following day against Zuckerman, the kind of player he had earned a reputation for beating, he accepted a draw on the eighth move. He also drew quickly in the next round against Dumitru Ghizdavu, a 28-year-old Rumanian student who had emigrated to the United States shortly before the tournament and was invited to play on less than 48 hours notice. Had he shown the same form of the tournament's first week, Browne would have expected at least two points from those three games.

The defending champion's lead slipped to a half point as Byrne won from Shamkovich and Grefe. Browne won the next day but then drew quickly with Reshevsky with the White pieces (11 moves) and the day afterward with Lein. Byrne picked up 2½ points out of three during this period and managed to tie Browne on the eve of the final round.

There was no zonal seed up for grabs this year, only $15,000 – a new record – in prizes. And since Grefe and Reshevsky drew quickly in order to share third place, there was only first prize at stake on the top boards. The big prize was $3500, while second was $2500: Plenty to fight for.

Yet both leaders were cautious. Byrne, with White, drew in only 15 moves with Zuckerman. Browne might also have drawn quickly, but Christiansen refused his pre-game draw offer – or at least that was what Christiansen said afterwards. The Modesto, Calif., youngster had earned the grandmaster title in two Spanish tournaments in which he battled for first prize with Byrne. Now he resolved to slug it out tactically with Browne and perhaps help Byrne to the title.

Queen's Fianchetto Defense
***white* Browne, *black* Christiansen**

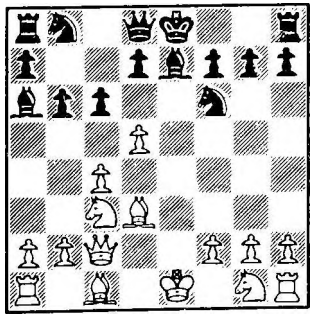
1 P-Q4 P-K3, 2 P-QB4 P-QN3, 3 P-Q5!? B-R3!

The opening system with ... P-QN3, in which Black dares his opponent to play P-K4, was both very old and very new in 1977. It had been tried in the previous century but not often by strong players and as a result was considered too bizarre for master chess until revived in the mid-1970's. It suits this occasion perfectly because for White to avoid a double-edged middle game he will have to struggle for an initiative in a foreign opening.

4 P-K4 P × P, 5 KP × P N-KB3, 6 N-QB3? B-N5!

The attack on White's QBP, which was chosen instead of the more natural 3 ... B-N2, has granted Black equality with some chance for more. He can now undermine White's brittle center with ... P-QB3.

7 Q-K2*ch* B-K2, 8 Q-B2?! P-B3!, 9 B-Q3



After 9 B-Q3

Browne-Christiansen, 1977

9 ... P-QN4?

A bit too much. After the simple retreat 9 ... B-N2 White could do nothing further to support his center of pawns and would have had to play 10 P × P N × P, which grants Black a nice little advantage.

10 BP × P P × NP, 11 KN-K2!

This is a common sense decision although Browne, with his penchant for calculation, probably had worked out the variations beginning with 11 B × P B × B, 12 N × B Q-R4*ch*, 13 N-B3 N × P, 14 Q-K4 N × N!, 15 Q × R 0-0 and concluded they were too dangerous. White now obtains a solid position in the center in exchange for a pawn.

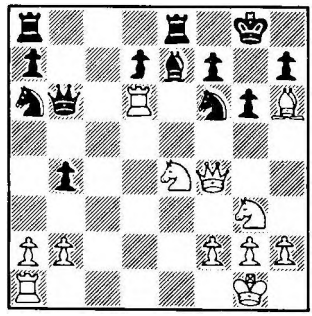
11 ... P-N5, 12 N-K4 N × P, 13 0-0 0-0, 14 R-Q1 Q-R4?, 15 N(2)-N3 P-N3?!

On this or the last move Black should have reduced his liabilities by exchanging bishops and knights (... B × B and ... N-KB3). Browne's kingside attack now springs up quickly.

16 B-R6 R-K1, 17 Q-Q2 N-KB3, 18 Q-B4 Q-N3

Christiansen began to realize about this point the dangers to his KB2, such as after 18 ... N-Q4, 19 Q-K5 P-B3, 20 N × P*ch*! which wins.

19 B × B N × B, 20 R-Q6!



After 20 R-Q6

Browne–Christiansen, 1977

Cutting communication between queen and kingside. The final combination is one of the nicest in championship history.

20 ... B × R, 21 N × N*ch* K–R1, 22 B–N7*ch*! K × B, 23 N(N)–R5*ch*!

Now on 23 ... K–B1 White wins with 24 Q–R6*ch* K–K2, 25 R–K1*ch*.

23 ... P × N, 24 Q–N5*ch* K–R1, 25 Q–R6 B × P*ch*, 26 K–R1!

Black's last move wasn't a spite check; there actually was a trap (26 K × B?? Q–Q3*ch* and 27 ... Q–Q6). But now Black must give up his queen and the rest of the game is a mop-up, made interesting only because of Browne's by-now-patented time pressure, which had two dozen spectators standing, some on chairs, to see the pieces fly:

26 ... Q × N, 27 Q × Q*ch* K–N1, 28 Q–N5*ch* K–R1, 29 Q–B6*ch* K–N1, 30 Q–N5*ch* K–R1, 31 K × B R–K3, 32 R–Q1 R–KN1, 33 Q–B4 R(K)–N3, 34 P–N3 P–B3, 35 R × P N–B4, 36 R–Q6 P–R5, 37 Q × RP P–QR4, 38 Q–Q4 and Black resigns.

So it was one great game at the very beginning and one great game at the very end, to give Browne his third straight title.

1978: Exit Browne, Stage Right

At the beginning of each championship, and of each other major tournament for that matter, an appeals committee is chosen. Often the members are elected from among the players to decide matters of fact in rules disputes that are appealed above the tournament director. If there is a question of interpeting the rules themselves, the matter can be passed on to the national federation, or even to FIDE headquarters in Amsterdam. But in a U.S. championship, despite its traditions of personality conflict and intense rivalry, few verdicts are ever appealed. When the appeals body was selected the day before the first round of the 26th championship, alternate member Robert Byrne was asked how often he expected the committee to meet. Byrne couldn't remember the last time one had.

The 26th championship would have been Walter Browne's biggest test up to that time. Facing him were virtually all the top players of the last three events—Kavalek, Byrne, Shamkovich, Lein, Tarjan, Rogoff and the rapidly improving Christiansen. There had never been more than four of these challengers in any previous championship and while Browne's performances had been remarkable they had also been far better than his results abroad. They were better, in fact, than his results in

25th U.S. Championship, Mentor, September 25–October 14, 1977

	B	B	R	G	L	Z	T	C	M	G	P	S	S	F	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Browne	X	1	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	6	6	1	9–4
2. R. Byrne	0	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	5	7	1	8½–4½
3–4. Reshevsky	½	½	X	0	1	½	1	0	1	½	½	½	½	1	4	7	2	7½–5½
3–4. Grefe	0	0	1	X	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	5	5	3	7½–5½
5–6. Lein	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	2	10	1	7–6
5–6. Zuckerman	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	2	10	1	7–6
7. Tarjan	1	½	0	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	2	9	2	6½–6½
8–9. Christiansen	0	½	1	½	0	½	½	X	1	1	½	0	½	0	3	6	4	6–7
8–9. Matera	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	0	1	1	½	½	2	8	3	6–7
10–12. Ghizdavu	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	X	0	½	1	½	2	7	4	5½–7½
10–12. Peters	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	X	0	½	½	1	9	3	5½–7½
10–12. Shamkovich	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	0	½	1	X	0	1	3	5	5	5½–7½
13. Soltis	0	0	½	1	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	1	X	0	2	6	5	5–8
14. Federowicz	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	X	2	5	6	4½–8½

other tournaments in the United States such as the annual masters invitational sponsored by retired industrialist Louis Statham in Lone Pine, Calif. There was doubt in June 1978 that Browne could do it again.

The tournament was held in probably the most idyllic of tournament quarters—the beautifully sculpted Southern California campus of the Worldwide Church of God. Perhaps not by accident, the church was Bobby Fischer's adopted faith, and during the tournament several of the players were granted brief audiences with the former champion, then living in seclusion a few miles from the Pasadena playing hall. No amount of convincing could get him to the Ambassador College auditorium for a glimpse of the game he once dominated.

But Browne seemed to fill the void of controversy left vacant by Fischer. At the initial meeting of players he revived his familiar complaint about lighting. Again, this year, he said it was inadequate and that this could seriously undermine his chances. "I sometimes get the impression," Grefe had said after the previous championship, "that he complains almost out of habit, or because he thinks it's expected of him as a champion." Indeed, the other players had long since taken Browne's pursuit of the perfect lighting as an annual event, one that should be minimized either by humoring him or ignoring him completely.

In Pasadena the tournament director was Isaac Kashdan, long in retirement as a player but among the most influential tournament organizers in the United States. He and Browne had clashed in the past—at Lone Pine and elsewhere—and there was often some difficulty between them in getting their views across to one another. This time, however, Browne made his feelings about the lighting crystal clear and Kashdan obligingly arranged to have the college's lighting technician meet with Browne the following morning to work matters out to the champion's satisfaction.

Here is where things became muddled: After seeing the lighting man the next day—a few hours before Round 1—Browne met Kashdan on the way out of the playing hall. Walter, somewhat excited, as he admitted later, explained that the lights were now good enough for him provided he be permitted to sit at a particular board throughout the event. Kashdan knew that this would mean special treatment for Browne, since the players' seating assignments are routinely rotated. But the champion was already being given special treatment *because he was the champion*—i.e., an extra $850 appearance fee and a fine guest cottage compared to the drab dormitories for the other players. Kashdan was willing to go along with the lights, and he and Browne parted on good terms. After Browne left, Kashdan, inspecting the tournament hall, noticed one of the tables out of line. He moved it back.

Three hours later the first round began. Browne came in several minutes late, almost unnoticed because of the excitement of fans examining the first moves to be posted on the handsome set of wallboards. Walter crossed the auditorium stage and before he got to the table, his table, he realized it had been shifted out from under the extra lighting. His lighting. Thinking that Kashdan had moved it on purpose, to spite him, Browne rushed over to the director and asked what had happened to the table. Kashdan, unaware that it was Browne who had moved the furniture, explained that it was moved back to open a path for players to walk by. Browne seemed shocked but failed to explain why he was shocked. He did not say that the table position was important to him or that the position of the table, rather than his seat at it, was critical to his earlier demands about the lighting. In fact, he didn't complain about the table at all: He only asked Kashdan, "Why do you hate me?"

Kashdan replied that he didn't hate Browne, and with that Walter stormed off the stage, without sitting down or even acknowledging his opponent, Christiansen. Hours later, after Kashdan ruled that the champion had lost the game on forfeiture, a few intermediaries sought to appeal on Browne's behalf. They argued that the withdrawal of the three-time champion could hurt ticket sales, tournament publicity and ultimately the cause of chess in the United States. Kashdan agreed to call a meeting of the players' appeals committee and later that evening they heard Browne present his side—and his declaration that he would leave the tournament site that night if the forfeiture was not expunged. He would agree to play the Christiansen game on some other day. It would be up to Christiansen and the appeals committee to decide.

During the appeals meeting it became clear that neither Browne nor Kashdan had understood one another at their two encounters earlier in the day and that the forfeiture was as much an accident as anything else. Later, in private, the committee asked Christiansen if he wanted the decision left to him. The 22-year-old GM, understandably annoyed at Browne's behavior towards him, did not want the responsibility of deciding whether Browne might go to the next interzonal. The appeals committee—Lombardy, Rogoff and Soltis—wrestled with the problem for two hours and finally decided that it shouldn't put Christiansen—the one blameless person in the whole mess—on the spot. They upheld Kashdan's forfeiture. Lombardy then went to Browne's cottage to talk him out of leaving, but by morning he was gone.

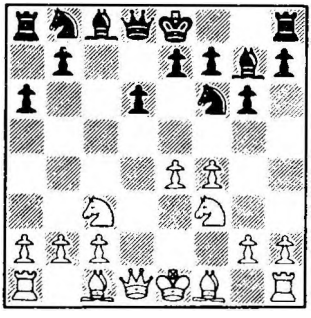
Meanwhile, there was still chess to be played. Browne–Christiansen could have been the feature of the first day, but instead, this took its place:

Sicilian Defense
white Kavalek, *black* R. Byrne

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 P-Q3, 3 P-Q4 P × P, 4 N × P N-KB3, 5 N-QB3 P-QR3, 6 P-B4 P-KN3

Byrne had played both sides of the Najdorf Variation over the years, including that memorable win over Evans in 1965. Most recently he had lost to Boris Spassky in their 1974 Candidates match when the Russian played 6 P-B4 and Byrne used a plan of ... Q-B2 and ... P-K4. Here he adopts a new policy, that of transposing into a kind of Dragon Variation in which P-KB4 by White may be somewhat out of place. His strategy is plainly provocative.

7 N-B3 B-N2?



After 7 ... B-N2

Kavalek–R. Byrne, 1978

8 P-K5!

This disorients Black's pieces: his knight cannot retreat to KN5 without losing time to P-KR3 and P-KN4, and it cannot go to Q2 without losing a pawn. The only other options are opening the game up with 8 ... P × P (9 Q × Q*ch* K × Q, 10 P × P followed by a strong B-KB4 and 0-0-0) or the uncomfortable squares R4 and N1.

8 ... N-R4?, 9 B-B4 0-0, 10 N-KN5!

This simply wins a piece. Black cannot meet the threat of 11 P-KN4 since 10 ... P × P, for example, is met by 11 Q × Q and 12 N × BP. Byrne fought for compensation with:

10 ... P-K3, 11 P-KN4 N × P, 12 B × N P × P

... but he was already lost and gave up after another 21 moves—

13 Q × Q R × Q, 14 B-K3 P-R3, 15 KN-K4, P-QN4, 16 B-N3 P-B4, 17 P × P P × P, 18 B-N6! R-B1, 19 N-Q6 B-Q2, 20 0-0-0 K-R2, 21 KR-N1 P-K5, 22 N-K2 B-K4, 23 P-KR4 P-QR4, 24 P-R3 R-R3, 25 B-B7 R-R2, 26 B-N6 R-R3, 27 B-B5 R-KB3, 28 B-R2 R-KN3, 29 N-B7 R × R, 30 R × R B-KB3, 31 B-Q4 B × B, 32 N × B P-N5, 33 N-K5 B-B1, 34 N × BP and Black resigns.

Kavalek then neutralized another potential rival in the second round when he found that Rogoff had misanalyzed a delicate, but defensible, knight-and-pawn endgame. As with the Byrne surprise, this was also overshadowed by a dispute. This time it involved Mednis and Shamkovich and it later turned out to have a powerful impact on the fight for the interzonal places.

It seemed to be a fairly uneventful game to most witnesses. Mednis then 41, became short of time in a slightly inferior position. He tried to beat off Shamkovich's pressure with a small combination but there was a flaw and with a few extra minutes to find it, Shamkovich reached the time control a piece ahead. Mednis promptly resigned.

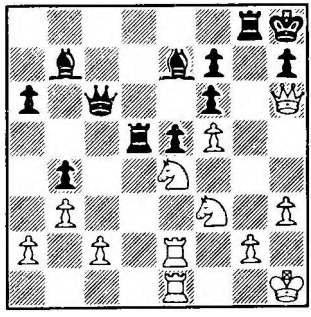
A short time later, however, Mednis discovered that he had been victimized by his clock. A spectator – Rogoff's fiancée – noticed that the times indicated on the stage clocks for the amount taken by Shamkovich and Mednis were much more than for any other game. She told another spectator who told an assistant tournament director about the apparently "fast" clock. But for some unexplained reason the clock was never examined and Mednis not informed of the problem until after he had resigned. Understandably upset when he found out about the behind-the-scenes activities, Mednis drafted a well-argued appeal soon after the game. But his claim posed an extremely delicate question: If he had forfeited on time before making his fatal blunder, the game would have been resumed once the clock's faultiness was discovered. Now, however, he was claiming that he would not have blundered if he had had more time. He was asking for the game to be resumed arbitrarily at the middlegame position, thereby cancelling more than a dozen moves. The appeals committee sympathized with Mednis but couldn't accept his basic premise – that the only reason he would play such a bad move as 30 ... P-Q4 was that he was short of time.

The normally affable Mednis, now a fulltime chess player, became visibly upset and threatened to sue everyone involved in the forfeiture verdict. He demanded that a statement be read at the beginning of each round, warning that he might drop out of the tournament at any

moment. Somehow, in the next few days, he cooled down and began to win. Or vice versa.

Meanwhile, Kavalek and Lein assumed the lead at 3–1, but the absence of Browne had created a bye which made the standings suspect. Christiansen had 2½ points but had only played three games. Also, Mednis fought back to equality but had to wait for a bizarre time forfeiture. In a preposterously lost position, with no queen of his own and two of Mednis' on the board, Lombardy sealed his 90th move. He didn't resign. Nor did he show up for the resumption of the game, forcing Mednis to wait for him to forfeit on time in the tenth hour of a very long game.

The other contender who bounced back was Tarjan. He had been outplayed by Lein in the fourth round, getting swindled although a piece ahead. But Tarjan then pressed a small but significant advantage against Kavalek until it had grown to fatal proportions. And the next round saw him face Byrne in a battle of tactics.



Tarjan–Byrne, 1978
After 28 ... R–Q4

With two bishops and a solid pawn in the center, Byrne would appear to have sufficient compensation for his king position weaknesses. But his young grandmaster rival pinpoints the hole in his armor.

29 N–R2!

This will win the KBP—and ultimately the game—if it is permitted to remain on KN4. Black must act quickly and he did.

29 ... R–Q5!, 30 N–N4 QR × N, 31 R × R Q × P, 32 R(4)–K2 Q × BP

Now Black has two pawns for the exchange and is ready to activate them with ... P–KB4 and ... P–K5. Yet the White pressure is still confining and Byrne is the first to err in a difficult position.

33 R-KB2 Q-N3?

There was a nice drawing variation here in 33 ... R × N!!, 34 R × Q R × P since White must give back the sacrificed queen or permit perpetual check.

34 Q-R4 Q-N4?, 35 Q × Q R × Q, 36 R-QB1 P-KR4, 37 R-B7!

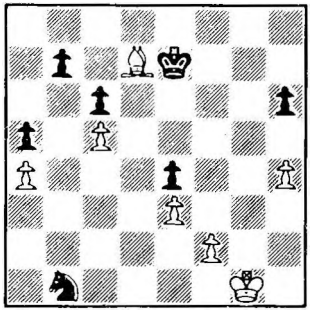
This fine move crumples Black's bishops and virtually eliminated Byrne's bid for the title. The rooks dominate:

37 ... P × N, 38 R × QB B-B4, 39 R × P(6) P × P, 40 P × P P-K5, 41 R(6) × BP K-N1, 42 KR-B7! P-K6, 43 R-B8*ch* B-B1, 44 R(N)-N8 R-KB4, 45 K-N2 and Black resigns (in view of 45 ... P-K7, 46 R × B*ch* R × R, 47 R × R*ch* and 48 K-B2).

Kavalek held a share of first place until Round 9, when he drew with Lombardy while Lein was defeating U.S. Junior Champion Ken Regan in 28 moves. Lein theoretically held first place by a half point but it was Christiansen who seemed destined to top the field. He was clearly a contender along with Shamkovich, Kavalek and Norman Weinstein—another former U.S. Junior champion and former New York City resident. But Christiansen had had his "Browne bye" and could plunge ahead of the pack when the other leaders had to sit out a round later on.

Weinstein, who had kept the race tight in Round 5 by crushing Christiansen, was also in excellent shape. Anyone who finished with two wins more than losses might qualify for the interzonals, and Weinstein so far had that one win and a long string of draws. But Weinstein refused to take risks. He remained on the verge of the "plus-two" he needed, while he piled up draw after draw, ceding second and then third place to other, more aggressive players. The last week began with Kavalek at 7½, Lein at 7, Shamkovich at 6 and Christiansen at 5½, but with an extra game to play and a relatively easy schedule. Yet there followed one of the most remarkable collapses in championship history. Christiansen began to lose, first to Benko in a tactical Sicilian when he overlooked the loss of a pawn, and then, as Tarjan edged past him in the standings, he tried to fight off his fellow Californian and was completely outplayed. This put Tarjan in clear second place at 7½, well behind Kavalek, but a half point ahead of Lein and Shamkovich. Lein fell in Round 14 to Kavalek, a game that clinched first prize for the Czech émigré, while Christiansen lost again. He finished out with five straight losses.

The real race was for third prize—and the last interzonal spot, behind Kavalek and Tarjan. Mednis had begun to gain ground, beating Rogoff and Zuckerman in successive rounds. Yet all Shamkovich had to do to finish in clear third place was draw with the White pieces against Lombardy on the final day. He quickly traded off pieces and seemed content with his position before it sharpened. Both sides had vulnerable sets of pawns and it became a battle between Shamkovich's bishop and Lombardy's knight:



Shamkovich–Lombardy, 1978
After 34 ... N × R

35 B–B8 N–B6, 36 B × P K–Q2!

The knight proves more agile now than the bishop and a desperate Shamkovich must rush to the queenside to stop the Black QRP.

37 B–R6 N × P, 38 K–B1 N × P, 39 B–B4 K–Q3, 40 K–K2 N–Q2!, 41 K–Q2 N–K4, 42 B–K2 P–B4, 43 K–B3 P–B5, 44 B–B1 K–B4, 45 B–N2 N–B6

White's chances of holding the position hinge on getting his bishop to a new diagonal at K6 where it can stop the enemy pawns from advancing up the queenside files. But Black, who played the ending elegantly, had an answer.

46 P–R5 P–R5, 47 B–R3 P–R6, 48 B–K6 N–Q7!

And since the knight cannot be taken (49 K × N P–R7) Black establishes a new wall of protection. The game ended with:

49 K–B2 K–N5, 50 B–Q5 N–N6!, 51 K–N1 P–B6 and White resigns.

26th U.S. Championship, Pasadena, June 4–26, 1978

	K	T	S	M	B	L	W	R	L	B	S	Z	C	C	R	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Kavalek	X	0	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	7	6	1	10–4
2. Tarjan	1	X	1	½	1	0	½	0	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	6	6	2	9–5
3–4. Shamkovich	½	0	X	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	0	5	6	3	8–6
3–4. Mednis	0	½	0	X	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	4	8	2	8–6
5–7. R. Byrne	0	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	3	9	2	7½–6½
5–7. Lein	0	1	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	3	9	2	7½–6½
5–7. N. Weinstein	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	13	0	7½–6½
8. Rogoff	0	1	½	0	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	3	8	3	7–7
9–10. Lombardy	½	0	1	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	1	½	0	½	1	3	7	4	6½–7½
9–10. Benko	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	11	2	6½–7½
11–12. Soltis	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	1	1	½	½	2	8	4	6–8
11–12. Zuckerman	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	0	12	2	6–8
13. Christiansen	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	1	0	0	½	X	1	1	3	5	6	5½–8½
14–15. Commons	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	1	8	5	5–9
14–15. Regan	0	½	1	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	1	8	5	5–9

The tie for third place had to be resolved to determine who would go to the Riga Interzonal the following year, so a match was ordered by the USCF. But it was never played. Mednis, still in a contentious mood, said that he and Shamkovich deserved a substantial prize fund for their playoff. But the federation officials, who had raised a relatively large $25,000 for the championship tournament, were unwilling to add much more money to the playoff because then the match winner might end up with more money for third place than Tarjan had for finishing second. Mednis then indicated he might not play at all. And when the match was finally begun, he forfeited each of the games, claiming ill health.

1980: The Old Guard and the New

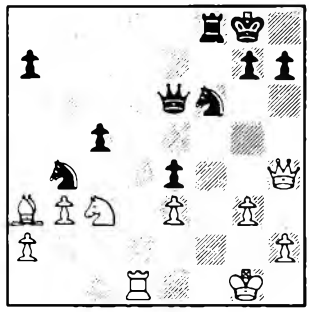
The 27th and 28th championships can be considered twin tournaments. They had these characteristics in common with one another—and with a few of their predecessors: They were held in middle America—Greenville, Pennsylvania, on the campus of a 110-year-old Lutheran college in the western part of the state and South Bend, Indiana, near the Notre Dame campus. They had new faces in abundance—Yasser Seirawan, Texas Joe Bradford, Marc Diesen, Peter Biyiasas and Vitaly Zaltsman in the 27th, and Sergey Kudrin, Joel Benjamin, Boris Kogan and Lev Alburt in the 28th. They were both influenced by the Soviet emigration that continued to add at least one strong master to the United States every year. They were also the first championships into which players could be seeded by piling up Swiss System tournament successes under a format sponsored, and enriched with extra prizes, by Church's Fried Chicken, a fast food chain.

Moreover, the twin championships showed two other novelties. Together they comprised the big step forward by the post-Fischer generation. Players such as Christiansen and Seirawan would soon be among the world's very best and would look at Browne, 7 and 11 years older than they, the way Evans and Byrne had once looked at Fine and Kashdan. They were a very new generation.

But the second novelty was restricted to the 27th championship: the last hurrah of the 1940's generation. The results of Byrne, Bisguier, Evans and Benko had been slowly but perceptibly declining during the previous five years and there was doubt that they would ever again be a major factor in the race for the national title. They still could defeat individually any player in the event on a given day but could no longer sustain a series of successes that could put them in prolonged contention. In fact, in the following year their place would be taken by the

remarkable Reshevsky – who had been virtually written off nearly 20 years before.

The veterans began exceptionally poorly in the first round at the Thiel College campus as Seirawan and Peters methodically crushed Evans and Bisguier, while Byrne collapsed tactically to Bradford. Of all the players who played in the post-Fischer championships, Bradford was one of the biggest surprises. He came as a virtual unknown, having qualified by way of an upset victory in the relatively weak 1978 U.S. Open in Phoenix, Arizona. Bradford, of Austin, Texas, was by far the lowest rated in the field, and considered an easy point by some of the grandmasters. He certainly seemed to be living up to predictions as Byrne developed an overwhelming position with the Black pieces the first day.



Bradford–Byrne, 1980
After 27 B–R3

White's position seems solid enough but he has too many holes, such as his K3, KB2 and KB3, that can be exploited tactically. With two pieces undefended, he was also vulnerable to a surprise such as 27 ... N × P! which would have won quickly (28 N × N Q × P attacking three pieces). Byrne, uncharacteristically, misses this.

27 ... Q–K4?, 28 N–R4 KN–Q4?!

This leads to a winning position after a few moves but 28 ... N–Q6, which threatens nothing but contains everything, is stronger.

29 N × P N × KP

And this time Byrne misses the powerful 29 ... Q–B4! which should end the game quickly, for example after 30 Q × P Q–B7*ch*, 31 K–R1 N × KP, 32 R–KN1 Q × R*ch*!

30 N-Q7!

Bradford finds the one chance in a difficult position. He was still dead lost after the pretty move 30 ... Q-Q3!, exploiting the inability of White's rook to leave the first rank (31 R × Q R-B8 *mate*). Byrne finds a move that looks just as good, perhaps better.

30 ... Q-Q5??, 31 Q × P*ch*!

But it's much worse. Black had to resign after 31 ... K × Q, 32 N × R*ch* K-N1, 33 R × Q QN-B7, 34 R × P. "I had you crushed like a chicken," said Byrne. "Yup," conceded Bradford.

Browne beat Bradford the next day when five of the other six games that round were drawn and he appeared to be starting off in search of the title he felt had been unjustly stripped from him in Pasadena. But the following afternoon he came up against Christiansen, the player who had been waiting for him on the Ambassador College stage when Browne walked out two years before. The former champion appeared to take the game lightly, playing the black side of a Nimzo-Indian Defense very provocatively. When he opened the center and advanced his KRP to the fourth rank in what seemed to be a perfectly normal middlegame position, Christiansen's pieces instantly began to swarm over the board. Within six moves Browne's game was in ruins and within ten it was resignable. It was only Browne's third loss in five championships.

Christiansen at 24 was already an accomplished chess professional and the most feared tactician in the U.S. He had grown up under the Southern California sun playing chess with his father and older brother between laps in the pool of the swimming club the family belonged to. At age 14 he was national high school champion even though still himself attending junior high. By the time of the Greenville tournament he had competed in 18 international tournaments, from Cuba to Estonia, and was then touring the United States giving simultaneous blindfold exhibitions on behalf of Church's Fried Chicken.

With his unusually deep tactical sight Christiansen held the lead until the sixth round. Then, in the tournament's second stunning upset, he played too quickly against Bradford in a winning endgame and transformed it into a loss almost instantly. This dropped him into a four-way tie, but the tie did not include Browne, who was given a bye. The bye was necessary because Marc Diesen, one of the most promising American youngsters at the time and a former world junior champion, had to withdraw after mysteriously falling down a flight of stairs on the night of the third round. Browne, a half point back of the leaders, was

promised one more game as a result of the bye and therefore a chance to catch up.

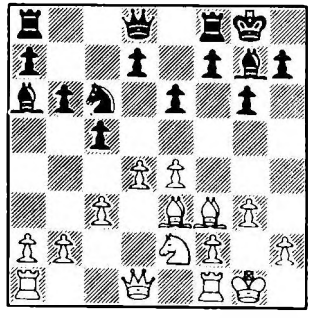
So could the tournament's oldest contender, Larry Evans. He had been invited almost by accident. At the last minute Kavalek cancelled out of the event and the USCF found itself having to break a tie for the substitute invitation. On the basis of rating, both Evans, 52, and Nick deFirmian, 23, were next in line. The USCF decided to break the tie by finding the average rating for the two players. The winner of this had to be Evans because he had played no tournament chess at all in the previous two years – his *average* rating was his *current* rating and also his *peak* rating.

After the first-round setback, Evans had picked up speed, knocking off Peters and Biyiasas in well-played endgames. His defeat of Biyiasas, a former Canadian then living in San Francisco, was thematic:

Sicilian Defense
white **Biyiasas,** ***black*** **Evans**

1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 N-KB3 N-QB3, 3 N-B3 P-KN3, 4 P-KN3 B-N2, 5 B-N2 P-K3, 6 0-0 KN-K2, 7 P-Q3 0-0, 8 B-K3 N-Q5, 9 N-K2 KN-B3, 10 P-B3 N × N(6)*ch*, 11 B × N P-N3, 12 P-Q4 B-QR3!

White's delayed advance in the center only serves to expose his soft underbelly to Black's pieces. Here, for instance. 13 P × P would be met by 13 ... N-K4, 14 B-N2 N-B5 with a powerful initiative. As it stands, White is virtually forced to sacrifice a pawn.



After 12 ... B-QR3

Biyiasas-Evans, 1980

13 R-K1 Q-B3!, 14 B-N2 B × N, 15 R × B P × P, 16 P × P N × P, 17 R-Q2 N-B3

Evans, the outstanding materialist of his generation, is ready to exchange his horribly weak QP for White's QNP. White cannot regain his

lost material but he can make a good fight of it with P–B4 on this or the following move.

18 R–B1 QR–B1, 19 R × P? Q × P, 20 R–B2 Q–R6

And now White should try to find the best possible endgame despite his lost pawn. His attempts to complicate matters only backfire.

21 P–R4 P–KR4, 22 B–N5? N–K4, 23 B–K7 Q–R5

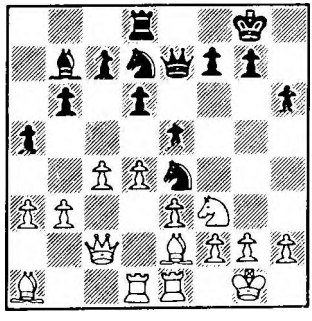
Now White gets forced back and his final slip, on move 27, allows Evans to demonstrate to a new generation what he had been famous for in the 1950's: merciless technique.

24 R(7)–Q2 KR–K1, 25 R × R Q × Q*ch*, 26 R × Q R × R, 27 B–B1? R–B7, 28 P–R4 N–B6*ch*, 29 K–N2 B–Q5!! and White resigns (30 K × N R × P *mate*)

The next day Evans defeated Byrne for the first time in a generation while Browne, Christiansen and Seirawan also maintained the winning pace. Only Seirawan among the leaders could win the next day and it appeared the 20-year-old from Seattle would continue to move up. But in perhaps the crucial game of the event, and also the "best overall game" of the event according to a special prize jury, Christiansen demonstrated how much he had grown since the five straight losses in Pasadena.

English Opening
white Seirawan, *black* Christiansen

1 P–QB4 N–KB3, 2 N–QB3 P–K3, 3 N–B3 B–N5, 4 Q–B2 0–0, 5 P–QR3 B × N, 6 Q × B P–QN3, 7 P–QN3 B–N2, 8 B–N2 P–Q3, 9 P–K3 QN–Q2, 10 B–K2 P–K4, 11 P–Q4 N–K5, 12 Q–B2 Q–K2, 13 R–Q1 QR–Q1, 14 B–R1 KR–K1, 15 0–0 P–QR4, 16 KR–K1 P–R3



After 16 ... P–R3

Seirawan–Christiansen, 1980

A curious but logical starting point for the middle game. Black's opening strategy involved the control of his K5 square and for that reason he gave up his black-squared bishop. To protect his black squares he then advanced as many of his pawns to them as he safely could. White tried to encourage an opening of the center that would benefit his two bishops. And now that both sides have reinforced their center with rooks it is time for someone to do something. Black's last move shows he is reluctant to play ... P–KB4, for example. Seirawan now forces his hand.

17 B–Q3 P–KB4!?, 18 P–B5! NP × P, 19 P × KP

This was the point of White's previous move. Black's pawns come under terrific fire after 19 ... P × P, 20 B–N5! N–N4, 21 N × N.

19 ... K–R1!, 20 P × P P × P, 21 B–B1 Q–B2, 22 Q–N2

A pretty position for White's queen and bishop and the best way of attacking the long diagonal leading to KN7. Black plays the next stage expertly.

22 ... QN–B3, 23 N–Q2 B–Q4!, 24 N × N R × N, 25 R–Q3?

In a sense, this is the losing move, because Seirawan never regains control of the light squares around his king, or the vital K4 square. The position called for 25 P–B3!

25 ... R–KN5!, 26 Q–Q2 B–B6!

This serves a useful purpose in stopping White from connecting his queen to the kingside with P–B4 at some point. Now, for example, 27 R × P would lose to 27 ... R × P*ch*!, 28 B × R Q–N3!, 29 R × R*ch* K–R2 (but not 27 ... R × R, 18 Q × R R × P*ch*, 29 B × R Q–N3 because of 30 Q–N3).

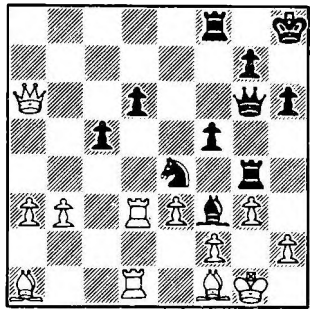
27 P–N3 N–K5, 28 Q × P R–KB1, 29 Q–R6

Hoping to bring the queen back to the kingside, via B–KN2 and Q–B1. The immediate 29 B–N2 leaves White outgunned on the kingside following 29 ... B × B, 30 K × B P–B5!, 31 P × P Q × P, 32 P–B3 R × P*ch*! or 32 R–KB1 N × BP.

With Black's next move he threatens a double sacrifice on KN6 and

also prepares to meet 30 B–KN2 with 30 ... B × B, 31 K × B R–R5! followed by ... N × BP.

29 ... Q–N3, 30 KR–Q1!?



After 30 KR–Q1

Seirawan–Christiansen, 1980

30 ... P–B5!

An illustration of how a powerfully centralized knight can outweigh a good bishop, even a bishop that has a clear diagonal from QR1 to KN7. Black's knight contains the enemy rooks and queen and threatens to take the kingside apart. There is no reason for Black to blunt his attack by capturing on Q8, although he would have a winning position after 31 P × P B × R, 32 R × B R(1) × P.

31 R × P? P × NP!

Absolutely crushing (32 R × Q P × BP *mate*; 32 BP × P R × P*ch*).

32 B × P*ch* K–R2! and White resigns.

Because Christiansen had the bye the next day, his half-point lead on the rest of the field couldn't hold up. Seirawan rebounded by outplaying Lein easily with his Modern Defense and then won the following day against Peters to surge into the lead. But he too had to take the bye, and when it came in Round 12, a massive tie for first place resulted. The tie included Evans and Christiansen, who had been coasting along with draws in the previous few days. But the tie also was shared by Browne, who had been given up for dead when Shamkovich defeated him in a prize-winning rook-and-knight ending in Round 9. After that loss he was tied for fifth through eighth place, a point and a half away from Christiansen's lead. But with key wins over Biyiasas and Peters—the latter being one of Browne's nemeses over the previous few years—the

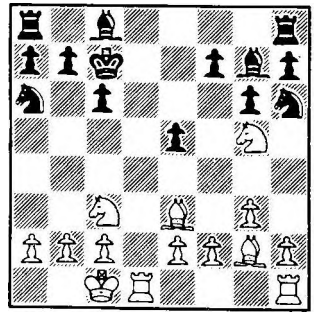
former champion nudged past "the Russians" and other contenders into first place.

The final round saw the four leaders with difficult games, each knowing that a win could mean $5000 and first place while a loss could mean $900 and sixth. The youngest of the group, Seirawan and Christiansen, both had Black and they played riskily in their openings with Zaltsman and Shamkovich. Evans also faced a former Russian, Lein, but he played cautiously with the White side of a closed Sicilian Defense and had no reason to adjourn a drawish position after 45 moves.

But Walter Browne did have a reason. He emerged from the opening with Bisguier with all of the advantages that usually count in the endgame – better placed pieces, a strong passed pawn and the initiative. As Browne pressed closer and closer to a win, Christiansen dropped a pawn to Shamkovich but had enough counterplay to force a draw. Seirawan's game, however, appeared to be deteriorating as he and Browne adjourned. Those two games would decide the tournament. Within minutes of the resumption later than night, Bisguier found a clever defense in the knight-and-pawn endgame and Browne had to shake hands. Three of the four leaders had drawn and first place depended on what happened in the final game:

Modern Defense
white **Zaltsman,** ***black*** **Seirawan**

1 P-Q4 P-Q3, 2 P-KN3 P-KN3, 3 B-N2 B-N2, 4 N-KB3 P-K4?!, 5 P × P P × P, 6 Q × Q*ch* K × Q, 7 N-B3 P-QB3, 8 B-K3 N-QR3, 9 0-0-0*ch* K-B2, 10 N-N5 N-R3



After 10 ... N-R3

Zaltsman–Seirawan, 1980

There are a number of similar opening variations in which Black permits this exchange of queens and disorientation of his king. But usually he compensates for it. For instance, if White has played

P–QB4—which he has not done here—Black can attack the weakened pawn and perhaps occupy the weaker Q5 square in the ending. Here Black has little to show for his weaknesses: A risky way to play in a big game.

11 P–B4! P–B3, 12 KN–K4 KN–B4?!

Black wants to block the KB file but he can do it more successfully with pawns, e.g. 12 ... N–KN5, 13 B–Q2 P–KB4! and a subsequent ... P–K5.

13 B–Q2 P–R3, 14 P–KR4! B–K3, 15 P–KN4 N–K2, 16 P × P P × P

Zaltsman, a quiet 1976 émigré who had been thriving on Swiss System events in the United States, establishes a bind over the center with his next few moves. Black's KB and QN are sealed off (... N–N5 is always met by N–N5*ch*! and B × N) and White just needs time to prepare for the invasion of his rooks.

17 P–N5! P–R4, 18 N–B6 KR–KB1, 19 QN–K4 N–Q4, 20 P–B4! N × N, 21 P × N KB × P, 22 N × B R × N, 23 B–QB3

White must regain the pawn and has good chances of penetrating on the Q file. Note that 23 ... R–B7 self-traps the rook after 24 B × P*ch* and 25 B–KB3.

23 ... R–B2, 24 B × P*ch* K–N3, 25 B–Q4*ch* P–B4??

The losing move. After 25 ... K–B2 White would still have a long way to go. But now the sixth rank is cleared and White will play a devastating R–Q6*ch* if he is allowed. The rest of the game was a lengthy demonstration of Seirawan's delaying ability, but in the end it proved insufficient.

26 B–K5 R–Q2, 27 R × R B × R, 28 R–Q1 B–B3, 29 B × B P × B, 30 R–N1 R–K1, 31 R–N5 N–B2, 32 K–Q2 R–K3, 33 P–K4 N–K1, 34 K–K3 K–N2, 35 K–B4 K–B1, 36 R–N3 N–Q3, 37 B × N! R × B, 38 K–K5 R–Q7, 39 R × P R × P, 40 R × P*ch* K–Q2, 41 R–QR6 R–R7, 42 K–Q5 R × KRP, 43 R × P*ch* K–K1, 44 P–R4 R–R8, 45 K × P K–B1, 46 R–Q7 R–K8, 47 P–R5! R–R8, 48 K–N6 R–N8*ch*, 49 K–B6 R–QR8, 50 R–Q5 P–R5, 51 R–R5 K–K2, 52 R × P R × P, 53 P–B5 R–R5, 54 K–B7 R–R2*ch*, 55 K–N6 R–R8, 56 P–B6 R–N8*ch*, 57 K–B7 R–N7, 58 K–B8 R–N5, 59 P–B7

27th U.S. Championship, Greenville, June 11–29, 1980

	C	E	B	S	S	L	Z	B	B	B	B	P	B	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–3. Christiansen	X	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	4	7	1	7½–4½
1–3. Evans	½	X	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	5	5	2	7½–4½
1–3. Browne	0	½	X	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	5	5	2	7½–4½
4–5. Seirawan	0	1	0	X	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	1	½	5	4	3	7–5
4–5. Shamkovich	½	1	1	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	3	8	1	7–5
6–7. Lein	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	10	1	6–6
6–7. Zaltsman	½	0	0	1	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	0	1	3	6	3	6–6
8–12. Benko	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	X	0	1	½	½	½	1	8	3	5–7
8–12. Biyiasas	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	X	1	½	0	½	2	6	4	5–7
8–12. Bradford	1	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	X	1	1	½	3	4	5	5–7
8–12. R. Byrne	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	0	10	2	5–7
8–12. Peters	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	½	1	0	½	X	1	4	2	6	5–7
13. Bisguier	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	0	9	3	4½–7½

R-N4, 60 R-R7*ch* K-K1, 61 R-Q7 R-N8, 62 R-Q5 K-K2, 63 R-K5*ch* K-Q3, 64 R-K8 R-QB8, 65 P-K5*ch* K-B3, 66 R-K6*ch* K-Q4, 67 R-QN6 and Black resigned.

1981: The Reason Why

Midway through the 28th United States Championship Tournament, a few of the contending grandmasters were asked, simply, "Why?" Why did they play year after year when only the most promising, ambitious juniors seem to compete in the national championships of the Soviet Union and Europe? Why did they put in weeks of preparation and three weeks of play for a guarantee of only a few hundred dollars and the promise of a prize fund that is relatively small?

No one spoke of the honor of the title. Or of the tradition that went back to Mackenzie and Morphy. Or even of the Marshall trophy, which had unaccountably disappeared a few years earlier.

"I can't say winning a share of the championship means anything special to me," Christiansen said bluntly. "It's nice to play in because it's a round robin conducted under more civilized conditions than better-paying weekend Swisses."

"It's one of the few round robins in the country," agreed Tarjan. "The prize fund is never that great, but it's a great relief from the Swisses. Also it's a stepping stone to the world championship in zonal years." He wouldn't mind winning, he seemed to be saying.

The one player who put it in perspective was the player to whom it meant the most: "The U.S. championship is very important to me personally," said Walter Browne, "and I make a very conscious effort to finish first. The championship gives credibility to my simultaneous exhibition tours and gives me identification as 'the best there is.' It makes it easier to market myself if I have the title. It means more in foreign appearance fees and even more invitations to important tournaments that a non-U.S. champion may not get, regardless of his rating."

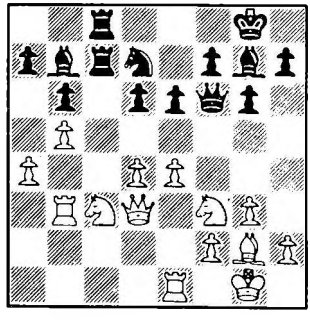
Christiansen and Tarjan were rated first and second at the start of the 28th championship, while Browne was only sixth, behind Kavalek, Seirawan and the latest Soviet émigré grandmaster, Lev Alburt. When play began on a hot Friday afternoon, July 10th, there was no clear favorite. Instead, the tournament shaped up as a field of relative equals, with no weak spots. Anyone, it seemed, could beat anyone, and when the final round finished 19 days later, it seemed they had. Even the last place finisher scored three wins, while the top four prize winners had suffered five losses altogether.

How rough the competition had become was apparent by the second round when Browne saw what had appeared to be a winning bishop sacrifice against Sergey Kudrin blow up in his face. Evans, another defending champion, lost his second straight game, this time being horribly outplayed in the opening against Byrne and forced to resign before his 21st move. He then withdrew from the tournament—the third straight championship in which someone had dropped out (Browne in '78 and Diesen in '80 had preceded him). This so outraged Lein, whose first-round victory over Evans was thus wiped out, that he muttered about it to the final day the players left South Bend.

Christiansen, who had put teeth into the Caro-Kann, began with a nice win over Tarjan on opening day, then fell back into the pack with a series of draws. Browne lost again—this time to 17-year-old Joel Benjamin. And to the astonishment of virtually everyone in the tournament, the leader after four rounds was Sammy Reshevsky.

Queen's Indian Defense
white Lein, *black* Reshevsky

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 N-KB3 P-K3, 3 P-KN3 P-QN3, 4 B-N2 B-N2, 5 0-0 B-K2, 6 P-B4 0-0, 7 N-B3 N-K5, 8 B-Q2 B-KB3, 9 R-B1 P-Q3, 10 Q-B2 N × B, 11 Q × N N-Q2, 12 KR-Q1 P-N3, 13 P-QN4 Q-K2, 14 R-N1 KR-Q1, 15 P-K4 P-QB3!, 16 R-K1 QR-B1, 17 Q-K3 B-N2, 18 Q-Q2?! B-QR3!, 19 P-N5 P × P, 20 P × P B-N2, 21 P-QR4 R-B2, 22 R-N3 R(1)-QB1, 23 Q-Q3 Q-B3!



After 23 ... Q-B3

Lein–Reshevsky, 1981

While seeming to make only defensive moves, Reshevsky has seized the initiative thanks to his two bishops. The bishops would have come into their own (with ... P-QB4) even if White had not forced the first pawn exchange with 19 P-N5. Now he has reason to be concerned about 24 ... P-K4. A few more moves and White is lost.

24 R–R3?! B–B1, 25 B–R3 P–KR4, 26 R–N3 B–N2, 27 R–K3 B–KR3, 28 R–K1 P–N4!, 29 B–N2 B–N2, 30 R–Q1 P–N5!, 31 P–K5? P × P, 32 N × P B × B!, 33 N × N Q–B6!, 34 N–K5 B × N, 35 P × B R × N, 36 R × R R × R, 37 Q–Q2 K–R2, 38 R–QB1 B–R6 and White resigns.

Meanwhile, waiting in the background was Seirawan. He was born in Damascus, Syria, on March 24, 1960—the same birthday, he once pointed out to a Soviet interviewer, as Vasily Smyslov. By the time his mother had moved to Seattle he had acquired the nickname, "Yes," and a wide range of interests. One of those was chess, which he first met at age 12 and mastered with astonishing rapidity. Ten months after learning the moves he was champion of Seattle and within two more years he had defeated his first grandmaster, Bisguier. He remained an American secret until a remarkable afternoon during the 1978 Lone Pine tournament. After polishing off a few other masters at speed chess, Seirawan found himself faced by one of the big boys, Tigran Petrosian. Petrosian was not only a former world champion but for many years the best speed player in the Soviet Union. Yet he quickly lost two games to a 17-year-old few east of the Atlantic had heard of. Petrosian bore down and finished the session ahead, but the other GMs in the room took notice.

By 1981 Seirawan had won two strong international tournaments and the world junior, earning a reputation for long but tactically dynamic games. In South Bend he scored his first win in 53 moves over Fedorowicz and would later score clutch victories in 41 and 45 moves. He never seemed to be a leader but suddenly during the final week appeared certain to finish first or second. "Yes" was the only one to go undefeated.

It was Reshevsky and Kavalek during the early rounds and they kept the lead going into the second week of play. But then Browne assumed his finest championship form, reminiscent of his early rounds in 1975 or the first and last games of 1977. He won three games in a row by knocking off Shamkovich in 107 moves and then Alburt and Peters. (In the Alburt game he sealed a move and left a Hershey bar. Tournament Director Bill Lukowiak sealed the candy in another envelope. On resumption, Browne opened both and consumed chocolate and Alburt in quick bites.)

Meanwhile, Kavalek was slowed by draws with Kudrin and the remarkable Reshevsky. Seirawan made it a three-way tie in Round 11 by fending off a dangerous-looking but insufficient attack by Boris Kogan. Kavalek and Reshevsky settled for draws with Browne and Tarjan, but Browne made it six out of seven by containing Tarjan the next day. That was the day Christiansen was upset by Benjamin, whose score of 5–7 was a considerable achievement for a 17-year-old in this company. Christiansen then beat Kudrin in Round 13 while the other leaders all drew.

At this confusing point, any one of five men could win the tournament Seirawan, Christiansen, Reshevsky, Kavalek and Browne—while Shamkovich, Byrne, Peters and Lein still had chances of getting to the interzonal. Kavalek would have the bye in the next-to-last (14th) round, while Browne would sit out the last day. The only thing that seemed clear was that Christiansen's final games would be the most significant. He would have Black against Reshevsky, followed by White against Kavalek. And it was the first game that set the stage:

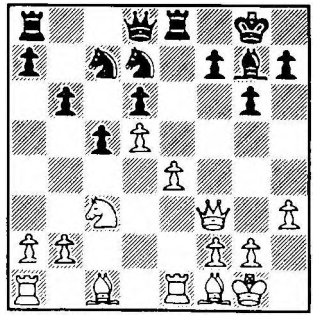
Benoni Defense
white **Reshevsky,** ***black*** **Christiansen**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 N-KB3 P-B4, 3 P-Q5 P-KN3, 4 P-B4 B-N2, 5 N-B3 0-0, 6 P-K4 P-Q3, 7 B-K2 P-K3, 8 0-0 R-K1, 9 N-Q2 N-R3, 10 R-K1 N-B2, 11 B-B1 P-N3, 12 N-B3 P × P, 13 BP × P

This recapture establishes the character of the opening, after an intentionally delaying sequence of preparatory moves by Black. The Modern Benoni setup of Christiansen's allows him to activate his queenside majority of pawns before White gets the central pressure that customarily gives him the initiative. Under a more normal order of moves—with ... KP × P and BP × P at move five or six, for example—White would have had time to get his king knight to the excellent QB4 square and begin to work against the pawn on Q6.

13 ... B-N5!, 14 P-KR3 B × N, 15 Q × B N-Q2

With this and his next two moves Black keeps control of the black squares in the center and this enables him to begin his queenside march. Reshevsky adopts the tried-and-true counterstrategy of stopping ... P-QN3-N4-N5 by playing P-QN4 himself.



After 15 ... N-Q2

Reshevsky-Christiansen, 1981

16 B-KB4 N-K4, 17 Q-N3 B-B3!, 18 P-QR4 P-QR3, 19 Q-K3 R-N1, 20 QR-N1 P-QN4

White's strategy appears purely defensive but it has a longterm policy in mind: He may blockade the queenside with P-R5 and P-QN4, though this concedes Black a passed protected QBP. White will then maneuver to regain control of the black squares with B-K3-Q4 so that he can blast the center open with P-B4 and P-K5.

21 P-QN4 P-B5, 22 Q-Q2 P × P!

A wonderful response that involves an attack from the wings and the sacrifice of the QBP in order to weaken critical squares. To win that pawn Reshevsky will have to give up his best bishop.

23 N × P N-N4, 24 B × N B × B, 25 B × P Q-B3, 26 Q-Q3 P-KR4!

By focusing on KN6 Black hopes to force a weakening that will let his queen and bishop run all over the kingside.

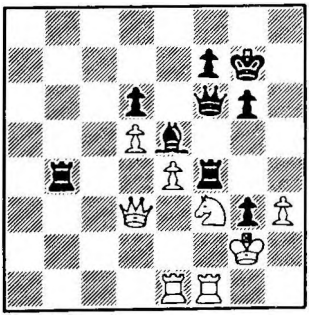
27 P-N3 P-R5, 28 P-B4 P × P!

After this, Black is clearly on top (29 P × B Q-B7*ch*).

29 R-KB1 B × P, 30 B × N P × B, 31 N-B3 Q-N4, 32 K-N2 B-K4, 33 QR-K1 K-N2!

And this brings the KR file onto the list of Black's assets. He will post a rook on KR5 and threaten to double rooks on the file.

34 N × P R-KR1, 35 R-KR1 R-R5, 36 N-Q4 QR × P, 37 N-B3 Q-B3, 38 KR-B1 R-KB5



After 38 ... R-KB5

Reshevsky-Christiansen, 1981

28th U.S. Championship, South Bend, July 9–30, 1981

	B	S	C	K	R	S	B	P	L	A	K	T	B	F	K	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–2. Browne	X	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	0	1	0	6	6	2	9–5
1–2. Seirawan	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	4	10	0	9–5
3–5. Christiansen	0	½	X	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	0	½	1	5	7	2	8½–5½
3–5. Kavalek	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	4	9	1	8½–5½
3–5. Reshevsky	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	4	9	1	8½–5½
6. Shamkovich	0	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	1	4	7	3	7½–6½
7–8. R. Byrne	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	1	12	1	7–7
7–8. Peters	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	3	8	3	7–7
9. Lein	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	11	2	6½–7½
10–12. Alburt	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	X	½	1	1	1	0	4	4	6	6–8
10–12. Kogan	½	0	½	1	0	0	1	½	½	½	X	½	0	0	1	3	6	5	6–8
10–12. Tarjan	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	X	1	½	1	3	6	5	6–8
13. Benjamin	1	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	X	½	½	3	5	6	5½–8½
14–15. Fedorowicz	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	X	0	1	8	5	5–9
14–15. Kudrin	1	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	0	½	1	X	3	4	7	5–9

Black can finish off with a series of hammer blows within a few moves. White's most vulnerable line is the second rank and he is constantly vulnerable to such possibilities as 39 N × B R–B7*ch*! (not 39 ... R–N7*ch*, 40 R–K2! R × R, 41 N–N4!), 40 K–N1 Q × N with a quick win, e.g. 41 R × R P × R*ch*, 42 K × P R–N7*ch*, 43 R–K2 Q–R7*ch*, 44 K–B1 R–N8*ch*!

39 R–K2 P–N4, 40 Q–B2 R–N1!, 41 Q–Q3 R–KR1, 42 R(2)–K1 P–N5, 43 N × B P × P*ch*, 44 K–N1 P–R7*ch*

And now a pretty finish: The pawns must be cleared away.

45 K–R1 P–N7*ch*!, 46 K × P P–R8(Q)*ch*!, 47 R × Q R–B7*ch* and White resigns.

This fine win dropped Reshevsky back to No. 5 in the list of interzonal candidates and, in retrospect, was the game that pushed Christiansen ahead of Kavalek as well. Since Kavalek and Christiansen drew on the final day, while Reshevsky won a game he had to against Kogan, there was a three-way tie for third place. But Christiansen was in perfect position for a potential playoff because of his win from Reshevsky – he would have the better tie-breaking chances as a result.

Meanwhile, Browne completed the most remarkable comeback since, well, Reshevsky in 1936. He defeated Fedorowicz, who was doomed to last place, and assured himself of a final 9–5 score. Even if Seirawan defeated Lein in the final round, Browne was assured of second prize. But, as in the previous years, Browne didn't stick around for the final hours. He left South Bend for his California home a day early to prepare for a tournament in Chile and didn't know for hours how Seirawan had held a slightly inferior position to achieve a tie for first place.

To break the tie for the third interzonal trip, a double-round playoff was held less than three months later in Jacksonville, Florida. If all six games were drawn, or if Kavalek and Christiansen were tied, the method of breaking the deadlock would favor the young man – because of that victory over Reshevsky in the 14th round. Reshevsky had one good chance to squeeze by. He adjourned a highly favorable rook-and-knight ending against Kavalek on the fifth day of play but could not break through. The game lasted 90 moves and Reshevsky gave it every ounce of energy he had left before agreeing to the draw. Thus Christiansen won on tie breaks.

1983: Equal First Among Equals

In the first 26 modern championships there had been only three ties for the title. Usually the winner—a Fischer or a Reshevsky—was a point or two ahead of his rivals. But beginning in 1980 the title was shared three straight times. Was the age of dominating champions over?

It certainly seemed that way in 1983 when the tournament returned to Thiel College. The selection again of the Pennsylvania campus was inevitable, and yet also controversial. It was inevitable because there simply were no bids from organizers to hold the event anywhere else. Local sponsors were eager to host a large, profit-making tournament such as a U.S. Open, which brings in tens of thousands of dollars in entry fees. But the United States Championship, by definition, loses money, and it is attractive to organizers only when there is a great deal of prestige at stake. "In a zonal year, it's easy to find a quality playing site," a top USCF official explained at Thiel that summer. "In other years you can't give the tournament away."

In the end the USCF turned to Thiel because of its low overhead. But this did not satisfy Yasser Seirawan, who had emerged during 1981–82 as the highest rated American in foreign events. At 23 he was already a European-style veteran used to receiving hefty appearance fees to play at deluxe hotels in places such as Tilburg, Berlin and London. When he learned that the 1983 championship was set for Greenville a "very upset" Seirawan wrote the USCF asking for more money, better publicity and living conditions and more advanced notice. The best U.S. players should not be "living in dormitories and eating cafeteria food," he said.

The controversy over Seirawan's refusal of his invitation tended to obscure the strength of the 29th event. It had been improved significantly by the presence of two relatively unknown players who had not been available in previous years despite very impressive results and ratings.

One was Roman Dzhindzhikashvili, 39, a Soviet immigrant who had reached New York by way of Israel, West Germany and various European casinos. An inveterate gambler, "Dzhindy" seemed to play chess whenever forced to by poker losses. But when he played he played very well and he had been rated among the world's top ten grandmasters only three years before. In 1983 he was considered for the first time to be an American and therefore eligible to play for the national title.

On the other hand, Nick deFirmian, 26, was a slim, laid-back Californian whose casual manner contrasted sharply with the high-tension, chubby Dzhindy. DeFirmian's casualness extended to his attire—the tournament officials at Thiel had to ask him to wear shoes

during the rounds. But this concealed an extremely aggressive tactical style. As Christiansen's play seemed to mellow in the 1980's, deFirmian assumed the role of America's most incisive attacking player.

The tournament began during a heat wave and, with no air conditioning in the dormitories, a series of early, get-acquainted draws might have been expected during the first week. But the opposite occured as there were 16 decisions and only five draws—one of which earned Sergey Kudrin a prize for "Best Swindle"—in the first three rounds. Profiting the most from this were Joel Benjamin and the newest Soviet émigré, Dmitry Gurevich, who each had perfect 3-0 scores.

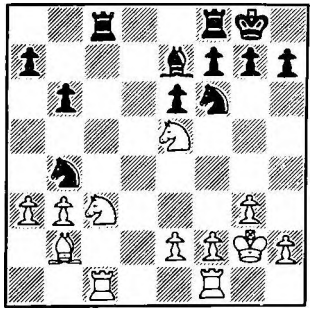
Benjamin, then 19, was sharpening his style and had won what later turned out to be the brilliancy prize game against Jay Whitehead, his successor as U.S. Junior champion, in the second round. But in the fourth round he was outplayed in an innocuous opening:

English Opening
***white* Dzhindzhikashvili, *black* Benjamin**

1 P-QB4 N-KB3, 2 N-QB3 P-B4, 3 P-KN3 P-K3, 4 N-B3 P-QN3, 5 B-N2 B-N2, 6 0-0 B-K2, 7 P-Q4 P × P, 8 Q × P 0-0, 9 P-N3 P-Q3, 10 B-QR3! N-R3, 11 QR-Q1 P-Q4?, 12 B-N2! P × P, 13 Q × BP

To avoid continuing pressure against his QP Black has advanced it and exchanged it off. But the result is a big lead in development for White and this will be more visible if he can position his rooks on Q1 and QB1 before Black coordinates his own pieces.

13 ... Q-B1, 14 Q-B4 N-QN5, 15 R-B1 Q-N1, 16 Q × Q! QR × Q, 17 N-K5! B × B, 18 K × B QR-B1, 19 P-QR3!



After 19 P-QR3

Dzhindzhikashvili-Benjamin, 1983

Surprise. Black is already lost, in view of N-N5 and N-B6 moves.

19 ... N-B3, 20 N × N R × N, 21 N-Q5! and Black resigns (21 ... R × R, 22 N × B*ch*!)

Dzhindy, who speaks Russian, German, Hebrew and English as well as his native Georgian, had little to say about the game. Neither did Benjamin. But tournament director Richard Verber summed up this miniature to an Associated Press correspondent: "Joel was killed like a chicken before he had a chance to flap his wings." The quotation appeared prominently in newspapers the next day, especially in nearby Pennsylvania and Ohio towns. "Youngest Chessmaster 'Killed Like Chicken'," said one headline, and spectators who had never heard a chess victory described in quite those terms began to travel 30 and 40 miles to Thiel to see what the excitement was all about.

The tempo cooled down in the next four rounds as Dzhindy and Christiansen maintained a cautious half-point lead over Browne. None of the leaders was taking any risks and they contented themselves throughout their three weeks in Greenville by trying to beat the lower half of the scoretable. As it turned out, all six games involving the top four finishers were drawn—and Browne and Dzhindy only scored one win against the players who finished in the top seven places. In fact, the most interesting games played during the tournament's second week were the high-stakes, five minute games between Dzhindzhikashvili and Kamran Shirazi, an Iranian émigré who specialized in winning weekend Swiss events in California. And the only drama came when Greenville police came to the tournament hall to take Whitehead into custody for breaking into the town's public swimming pool after hours. (The officers were talked out of their arrest.)

The main feature of the closing rounds was deFirmian's late bid for first prize. He had started out poorly, with two points out of five. But then he won Jim Tarjan's queen in Round 6, brought Dzhindy to the brink of defeat in Round 7 and ground down Shirazi and Alburt. Going into the 11th round he was still a distance from the leaders. Then:

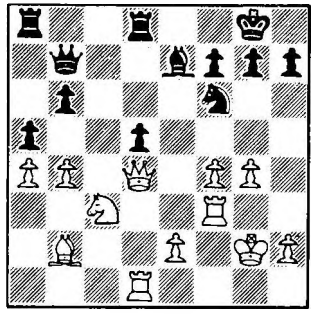
Queen's Indian Defense
***white* Gurevich, *black* deFirmian**

1 N-KB3 P-QB4, 2 P-B4 N-KB3, 3 N-B3 P-K3, 4 P-KN3 P-QN3, 5 B-N2 B-N2, 6 0-0 N-B3, 7 P-N3 B-K2, 8 B-N2 0-0, 9 P-Q4 N × P!, 10 N × N B × B, 11 K × B P × N, 12 Q × P Q-B2, 13 QR-Q1 P-Q3

The opening is similar to the Dzhindy–Benjamin game and typical of the restrained systems of the 1980s, which tended to be more elastic

and ambiguous than the King's Indians and Sicilians of the previous 25 years. Accurate simplification by Black has left White with an advantage in space that is difficult to use. Black is readying ... P-Q4 and ... P-QN4. Gurevich, who two months later became a grandmaster, hurries into a kingside attack.

14 P-B4!? P-QR3, 15 P-QR4 KR-Q1, 16 R-B3 P-Q4!, 17 P × P P × P, 18 P-QN4 Q-N2, 19 P-N4 P-QR4!



After 19 ... P-QR4

Gurevich-deFirmian, 1983

Black fights for control of his QB4 square so that he can play ... B-B4 and ... P-Q5, which virtually refutes White's attack. Gurevich must continue with a doomed plan.

20 P-KN5 P × P, 21 P × N B-B4!, 22 Q-K5 P × N, 23 B × P P-N3, 24 K-N3

This last move gets the White's king off the diagonal of Black's queen and prepares 25 KR-Q3, e.g. 24 ... R × P, 25 KR-Q3 R-K5?, 26 Q × R! P × Q, 27 R × R*ch* B-B1, 28 R × B*ch*! and mates. deFirmian won a prize for the best combination at Thiel for the last four moves of this game. But it might have been awarded for all his remaining moves.

24 ... P-Q5!, 25 B × P R-Q4!, 26 Q-K3 Q-Q2, 27 B × B (Forced) R × R, 28 B × P R-K1, 29 Q-B2 P-R4!, 30 P-R3 Q × P, 31 B-B5 R-K5, 32 B-K7 Q-B5, 33 R-K3

White's last chance for survival rests on protecting his pawns at K2 and KB4. Yet:

33 ... P-R5*ch*!, 34 K-N4 R-N8*ch*!, 35 Q × R R × P*ch*, 36 K-N5 R-B4*ch* and White resigns. (It's mate after 37 K-R6 R-R4.)

29th U.S. Championship, Greenville, July 14–August 1, 1983

	B	C	D	D	B	G	S	A	L	W	K	S	K	T	Totals W	D	L	Points
1–3. Browne	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	5	8	0	9–4
1–3. Christiansen	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	5	8	0	9–4
1–3. Dzhindzhikashvili	½	½	X	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	5	8	0	9–4
4. deFirmian	½	½	½	X	0	1	0	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	6	4	3	8–5
5–6. Benjamin	½	0	0	1	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	0	4	6	3	7–6
5–6. Gurevich	0	½	½	0	½	X	1	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	4	6	3	7–6
7. Soltis	½	0	½	1	½	0	X	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	3	7	3	6½–6½
8–9. Alburt	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	3	6	4	6–7
8–9. Lein	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	0	½	½	1	1	10	2	6–7
10. Whitehead	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	X	1	1	½	½	2	7	4	5½–7½
11–12. Kudrin	0	0	½	1	0	½	1	½	1	0	X	0	½	0	3	4	6	5–8
11–12. Shirazi	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	0	1	X	1	1	4	2	7	5–8
13–14. Kogan	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	X	0	0	8	5	4–9
13–14. Tarjan	½	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	½	1	0	1	X	3	2	8	4–9

That left the standings at Christiansen and Browne, 8½; Dzhindy, 8; deFirmian 7½. But with these pairings for the final two rounds it was clear a lot would change: deFirmian vs. Browne, then Christiansen vs. deFirmian. Browne, meanwhile, would play Benjamin on the final day. "That's the trouble with this tournament," Dzhindzhikashvili joked as he scanned the pairings, "Too many Americans."

An anti-Browne cabal then emerged, coalescing over late-night beers at Greenville's favored watering hole, the Alley Cat bar. What do I do tomorrow against Browne, deFirmian asked aloud and with that, pocket sets came out to help him prepare. After several opening ideas were proposed by players in the tournament one internationally titled master offered a new idea against Browne's Najdorf Sicilian "provided nobody tells Browne where this came from." All the conspirators agreed and they huddled over the idea, a knight sacrifice that—at 1 a.m.—looked strong.

But the next day Browne seemed to refute the "Alley Cat Variation" after 40 minutes of thought and a later time scramble. During the second session of play, Browne had a rook, knight and bishop but no pawns, against deFirmian's two rooks and pawn. The game resumed again in a private room after the tournament hall air conditioning collapsed and Walter tried until move 102 to win rook-and-knight-vs.-rook before he conceded the draw.

On the final day it was Benjamin who received free opening advice from the other players and he refused Browne's early offer of a draw. Christiansen, sensing his moment had arrived, then sacrificed a pawn against deFirmian. But his fellow Californian beat off the attack and in the fourth hour of play it appeared Browne might achieve clear first prize with a win or draw.

However the tide turned once more, allowing Christiansen a little combination and Benjamin a method of exchanging crucial pawns. Both games were drawn. Dzhindy's slow crush of Tarjan escaped attention but it allowed him to make it a three-way tie for $10,500 in prize money.

Couldn't anyone win clear first prize in this thing? The players wondered as they once again left Greenville.

1984: Fast Break

By the mid-1980's an entire generation of American players had grown up on weekend Swiss System tournaments. And because of that they had a hard time understanding what happened in Berkeley, California, July 9–30, 1984. How, they wondered, could a player, who

had never gotten as much as an even score in the national championship in two previous tries, roll up a score of 12½–4½ in what seemed to be the strongest-ever field? How could the three defending co-champions fall from an overwhelming record of 27–12 a year before to a marginal 26–25 in Berkeley? And how could another strong master, one of the most successful Swiss event players of the day, manage a score of one draw and 16 losses?

The answers lay in the difference between round robins and Swisses, and the overriding significance in a round robin of a strong start. Players had grown used to Swisses, in which the master who wins several games is paired with stronger and stronger opponents until he exceeds his talent and is pushed back down. A player who starts off badly knows, on the other hand, that he'll get easier pairings as a result. Often, in large Swiss System events, the final rounds count much more than the first few rounds.

The round robin is different and, as the preëminent round robin in America, the U.S. championship is very different. What had happened at the University of California Student Union building that July was similar to what happened at the Hotel Paso del Norte in El Paso 11 years before, when John Grefe's string of victories set the tournament tone. But this time it was Lev Alburt's string. Here's how it began:

Round 1. Alburt springs a new opening idea, a delayed version of his favorite Benko Gambit (1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-KB3 P-QR3!? 4 N-B3 P-B4, 5 P-Q5 P-QN4!) on Larry Christiansen and the defending champ has to concede a draw after 24 sharp moves. Only one game ended in a victory that day—Sergey Kudrin's grinding down on Kamran Shirazi in what eventually turned out to be a battle between the last-place and next-to-last-place finishers.

Round 2. Alburt stuns Jack Peters, who returned to the championship after a three-year hiatus. The game was decided in 18 moves:

Catalan Opening
white **Alburt,** ***black*** **Peters**

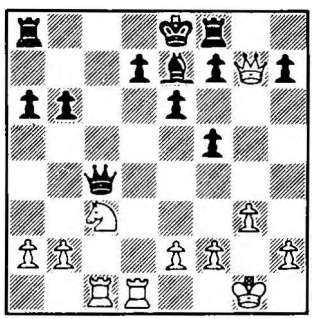
1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 P-KN3 P-B4, 4 N-KB3 P × P, 5 N × P Q-B2, 6 N-B3 P-QR3, 7 B-N5!? P-QN3

So far, a strange opening in which White dares Black to take the QBP and open up the QB file (7 ... Q × BP, 8 R-B1). Alburt, who specializes in unusual openings such as Alekhine's Defense and the Benko Gambit, now tries to unbalance the position with a series of double-edged exchanges.

8 B × N P × B, 9 B–N2 B–QN2, 10 B × B Q × B, 11 0–0 B–K2, 12 Q–Q2 N–B3, 13 N × N Q × N, 14 Q–R6!

By stopping 14 ... 0–0 as well as the aggressive 14 ... P–KR4, White confronts his opponent with a difficult decision about the future. What will Peters do in the next half dozen moves while Alburt is strengthening his center with rook moves and pawn advances? Peters decides to force matters.

14 ... Q × P, 15 Q–N7 R–KB1, 16 QR–B1 P–B4?!, 17 KR–Q1



After 17 KR–Q1

Alburt–Peters, 1984

White's major threat is 18 N–Q5 followed by R × Q or N–B7*ch*. With his last move Black may have been counting on 17 ... Q–KN5 but now this allows the powerful centralization 18 Q–K5, intending 19 Q–B7. For example, 18 ... R–B1, 19 P–K4 P × P, 20 N × P R × R, 21 R × R with multiple threats.

17 ... R–B1, 18 P–K4! P × P?

Overlooking the point of White's last move but Peters was already in deep trouble (18 ... R–B4, 19 R–Q4 or 18 ... R–B3, 19 P × P P × P, 20 Q–K5).

19 N–K2! P–K6, 20 R × Q and wins.

At this point Alburt's 1½–½ score was matched by five others.

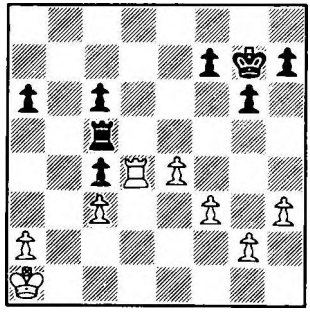
Round 3. As Black Alburt draws with Dzhindzhikashvili, who had beaten him badly a year before in Greenville and, most memorably, had swindled him in the final round of the 1980 Lone Pine International out of the $12,000 first prize.

Round 4. Facing the third defending champion, Alburt lures the

slow-starting Browne into an inferior endgame and squeezes him into submission after 71 moves. The Soviet defector is now tied with Tarjan in second place, a half point behind the other tournament surprise, 18-year-old Maxim Dlugy.

Round 5. Alburt uses his delayed Benko Gambit again, this time against Tarjan. The Californian weakens Alburt's pawns on both wings and prevents him from castling—but then badly misplaces his own minor pieces. By the 20th move Tarjan's huge lead in space and development is dissipated and he tosses away a pawn to break Black's initiative. Alburt engineers a favorable exchange of heavy pieces and by adjournment the trend is clear. Tarjan concedes on the 57th move.

Round 6. Facing the tournament leader, Alburt seeks an early exchange of queens and then pours on the pressure against his inexperienced opponent.



Alburt-Dlugy, 1984
After 33 ... R-QB4

White's pawn structure is much more sound and his rook is much better placed. But a winning plan is missing. White's king cannot approach the center easily (34 K-N2 R-N4*ch*, 35 K-B2 R-QR4) and Black is itching to invade with ... K-B3-K4-B5-N6.

34 P-QR4! P-KN4, 35 K-N2 P-KR4?

Whose king will make contact first? It appears that White is stopped on the queenside after 36 K-R3 P-R4.

36 R-Q6! P-N5

Dlugy realizes it is time to be desperate. He hopes for 37 RP × P P × P, 38 P × P R-K4, 39 R × P R × P. If Black sits on the position with 36 ... K-B1 or 36 ... P-B3 White will exploit the stalemated position of his rook with 37 K-R3 P-R4 (else 38 K-N4), 38 K-N2! followed by K-B2-Q2-K3-Q4.

37 P–B4! and Black resigns.

Nothing can stop the White king now.

Round 7. Someone finally plays 1 P–K4 against Alburt and it is Robert Byrne, who at 56 is by far the oldest player in the event. His bid to blow Alburt's Alekhine's Defense apart backfires and he becomes his fifth victim in seven games.

Round 8. A slight opening inaccuracy by Kudrin is relentlessly punished by Alburt who, for the sixth time, trades queens by the 22nd move. No one, it seems, can contain him in the endgame.

At this point the tournament had not yet reached the halfway mark, since it was to last 17 rounds—the largest championship since South Fallsburg in 1948. Yet the title was virtually decided because of Alburt's tremendous spurt. Consider the standings after eight rounds and how closely they resemble the final standings two weeks later:

	8 Rounds	*Final (17 Round) Result*
Alburt	7–1 (plus 6)	12½–4½ (plus 8)
Dlugy	6–2 (plus 5)	10½–6½ (plus 4)
Seirawan	5½–2½ (plus 3)	10½–6½ (plus 4)
Fedorowicz	5–3 (plus 2)	10½–6½ (plus 4)
Christiansen	5–3 (plus 2)	9½–7½ (plus 2)
Benjamin	5–3 (plus 2)	9–8 (plus 1)
Tarjan	4½–3½ (plus 1)	10½–6½ (plus 4)
Kavalek	4½–3½ (plus 1)	9½–7½ (plus 2)
Henley	4½–3½ (plus 1)	9–8 (plus 1)
Dzhindzhikashvili	4–4 (even)	9–8 (plus 1)
Kogan	4–4 (even)	9–8 (plus 1)

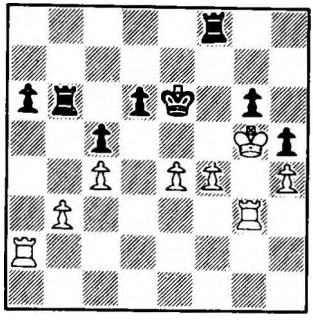
With a few exceptions the players coasted during the final nine rounds with many grandmaster draws. First prize was all but conceded to Alburt by Round 14 and he drew three of his last four games in a total of 50 moves.

There would be no Browne charge this year. Losses to Dlugy and John Federowicz had left him near the bottom of the scoretable after the first week. He fought back but a terrible blunder against Dzhindy in Round 12 followed by a disastrous loss in 20 moves to Tarjan spelled the end of his hopes for a seventh title in eight tries.

The closest call for Alburt came in Round 13 when he led Dlugy by one point and Yasser Seirawan by 1½. Seirawan, trying to make up for his absence in Greenville and seeking a running start for the 1985 interzonals, had turned the tables and was pressing Alburt in a long endgame. A victory would boost him into the fight for the $5200 first prize and, perhaps more important, re-establish his claim to being the top American player.

30th U.S. Championship, Berkeley, July 9–30, 1984

	A	D	D	F	S	T	C	K	B	D	H	K	B	B	G	P	K	S	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Alburt	X	0	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	9	7	1	12½–4½
2. deFirmian	1	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	6	10	1	11–6
3–6. Dlugy	0	0	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	6	9	2	10½–6½
3–6. Fedorowicz	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	5	11	1	10½–6½
3–6. Seirawan	0	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	6	9	2	10½–6½
3–6. Tarjan	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	6	9	2	10½–6½
7–8. Christiansen	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	4	11	2	9½–7½
7–8. Kavalek	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	2	15	0	9½–7½
9–12. Benjamin	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	1	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	5	8	4	9–8
9–12. Dzhindzhi	½	1	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	4	10	3	9–8
9–12. Henley	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	3	12	2	9–8
9–12. Kogan	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	1	1	4	10	3	9–8
13. R. Byrne	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	1	0	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	1	4	9	4	8½–8½
14. Browne	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	1	1	1	4	7	6	7½–9½
15. Gurevich	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	½	½	1	2	9	6	6½–10½
16. Peters	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	X	1	1	3	6	8	6–11
17. Kudrin	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	X	1	1	5	11	3½–13½
18. Shirazi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0	1	16	½–16½



Seirawan–Alburt, 1984
After 47 ... R–KB1

For once it was Alburt's opponent who had the better pawns, king position and piece placement in the endgame. The problem for Seirawan is finding a way to win. All three of his targets, the QRP, QP and KNP, are defendable. For example 48 K–R6 R–R1*ch* or 48 K × P? R–N1*ch*.

After six hours of maneuvering to reach this far, Seirawan thinks he has his breakthrough:

48 R–KB2 R–N2!, 49 P–B5*ch*?? P × P, 50 P × P*ch* R × P*ch*!, 51 R × R R–N2*ch*

This is the surprise defense that Alburt had prepared. Seirawan will lose all his queenside pawns now after 52 K–B4 R × R, 53 R × RP R × P, 54 R–R6*ch* K–Q2, 55 K–K4 K–B3 and 56 ... R–QB6. So he fought on with

52 K × P R × R, 53 R–N5 R × P, 54 K–N6

but Alburt forced a winning position with

54 ... R–N5, 55 R–N4 P–Q4, 56 P × P*ch* K–Q3!, 57 K–N5 R × R*ch*, 58 K × R K × P.

After this Alburt's lead was unstoppable and, in fact, most of the other players seemed content to draw with one another—and make sure they defeated Kamran Shirazi. The Iranian had gotten off to a start as bad as Alburt's was good. Following six straight losses he managed a draw with Dzhindy, then began another streak of zeros. Swiss System players, accustomed to dropping out of the tournament after the first loss, are often bewildered by the difficulties of round robins and Shirazi was a spectacular example. By the 15th round he was so discouraged that he set a negative record against Peters: He lost the shortest-ever game in a

U.S. championship. After **1 P-K4 P-QB4, 2 P-QN4 P × P, 3 P-QR3 P-Q4, 4 P × P Q × P, Shirazi-Peters, 1984** continued **5 P × P??** and **White resigned** after **5 ... Q-K4*ch*** because he will lose a rook.

The other major second-half exception was deFirmian. "Nick doesn't care about the score," explained his friend Fedorowicz. "Nick just wants to play." And this was illustrated by his second straight comeback in a championship. After scoring only 3½ points in the first eight games, the easy-going Californian won four straight games, defeating Alburt, Seirawan, Shirazi and Benjamin. His sprightly, aggressive style of play captured the imagination of the 1500 paying spectators, a championship tournament record. And when he needed a win in the last round, he ended up sharing the Brilliancy Prize.

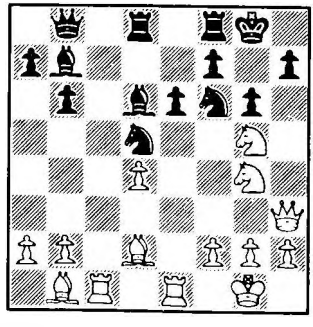
Queen's Indian Defense
***white* deFirmian, *black* Kudrin**

1 N-KB3 N-KB3, 2 P-B4 P-B4, 3 N-B3 P-QN3, 4 P-K3 B-N2, 5 P-Q4 P × P, 6 P × P P-K3, 7 P-QR3 P-Q4, 8 P × P N × P, 9 B-N5*ch* B-B3, 10 B-Q3 N-Q2, 11 0-0 B-K2, 12 R-K1 0-0, 13 N-K4 N(2)-B3, 14 N-K5 B-N2, 15 N-N5!

White has all the makings of a kingside attack, directed at KB7 or KR7. The next task is to direct his queen and bishop.

15 ... Q-B2, 16 B-Q2 QR-Q1, 17 R-B1 Q-N1, 18 Q-K2 B-Q3, 19 B-N1 N-K2, 20 N-N4! N(2)-Q4, 21 Q-Q3 P-N3, 22 Q-R3!

Black now blunders in a difficult position.



After 22 Q-R3

deFirmian-Kudrin, 1985

22 ... B-B5?, 23 B × B Q × B, 24 N-R6*ch* K-N2, 25 N(R) × P! R × N, 26 N × P*ch* K-N1, 27 N × R! N-N5, 28 R-K8*ch* resigns.

1985: More than a Fluke

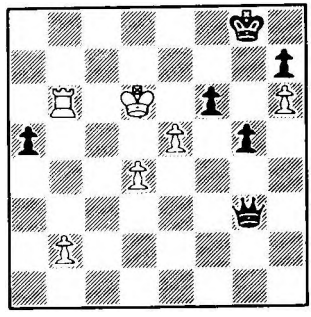
Lev Alburt's remarkable margin in Berkeley did not go down well with his colleagues. They suspected he was an aberration—a one-time titleist, like John Grefe who had declined sharply since his championship year of 1973. And their suspicions seemed confirmed when, for the first time, the reigning British and U.S. champions met in a challenge match. The British titleholder was teenaged Nigel Short who, a year before, had lost badly in an exhibition match with his opposite number in America, Joel Benjamin.

When Short destroyed Alburt by 7–1 in early 1985 the observers could draw one of two conclusions: Either Short had progressed stunningly in the previous year, or Alburt wasn't as good as his score at Berkeley. On the eve of the 31st championship one of his rivals summed up Alburt's chances of defending his title: "Accidents don't happen two years in a row," he said.

The invitation list was scaled down to a more manageable 14 players for the tournament, set for the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado, and there were three very notable absences. Seirawan was competing—and performing creditably—in France at the candidates tournament in Montpellier. Dzhindzhikashvili, the star of the 1984 U.S. Olympic team, had expected to be in Montpellier as Boris Spassky's second. But that plan fell through at the last minute and it was too late for Dhzindy to rescue his invitation to Colorado. And Tarjan turned down his invitation, telling friends he was tired of trying to make a living out of chess.

This left Larry Christiansen and Lubosh Kavalek as the highest FIDE-rated invitees, followed by Nick deFirmian and Benjamin, and then at a respectable distance in the rating hierarchy, by John Fedorowicz and Walter Browne—and then Alburt.

The tournament began quietly as six games in the first round and five in the second ended in draws—most of them short and bloodless. The exceptions were largely due to Shirazi. His risk-taking recalled that of Rudolf Spielmann, the Austrian attacking star of the early decades of the century who once won a special prize for the least draws in a major tournament, Karlsbad 1923—by losing the large majority of his games. The Iranian seemed headed for another negative record in 1985 when he was the only one to lose the first day and then lost his queen for a rook in a time scramble at the end of the first playing session of the second round.



Shirazi-McCambridge, 1985
After 52 P-K5

Having been substantially ahead in material for 10 moves, Black must have assumed that just about any move would win eventually.

52 ... P × P, 53 P × P Q-Q6*ch*??, 54 K-K7!

And yet he must now resign or be mated by 55 R-N8*ch*. An astonishing turnabout.

Round 3 saw the first of the tournament's two decisive games. Christiansen, with White, invited Alburt to try one of his offbeat openings again. The variation (1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 N-KB3 P-K3, 3 P-B4 P-QR3!?, 4 N-B3 P-B4, 5 P-Q5 P-QN4!) was dubbed the "Dzhindy-Indian" after his friend, and Alburt managed to equalize into a double-edged endgame by move 22. Despite the bishops of opposite color that appeared, White was always fighting for a draw in the later stages and by the end of time trouble Alburt's KP was too powerful to stop. Christiansen resigned on the 49th move and never fully recovered.

Alburt, who had played as a reserve on the Olympic team behind three other men from this championship, then began to build up a lead with victories over Kudrin, Browne, Fedorowicz and Shirazi. After eight rounds the defending champion led the field by an impressive point and a half, and since he would have the White pieces against his most dangerous opponents in the tournament's second half, he was again in the driver's seat. The second crucial game of the 31st championship came in Round 9:

Benoni Defense
white **Alburt,** ***black*** **deFirmian**

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-B4, 3 P-Q5 P-K3, 4 N-QB3 P × P, 5 P × P P-Q3, 6 N-B3 P-KN3, 7 P-KN3 B-N2, 8 B-N2 0-0, 9 0-0 QN-Q2, 10 R-K1 R-K1, 11 P-K4 P-QR3, 12 P-QR4 P-B5!

A thematic idea of the Benoni, giving White the QBP in return for pressure on his squares such as QN3, Q3 and K4 resulting from ... N–QB4. DeFirmian had an even score at this point in the tournament and seemed poised for another second-half charge into contention.

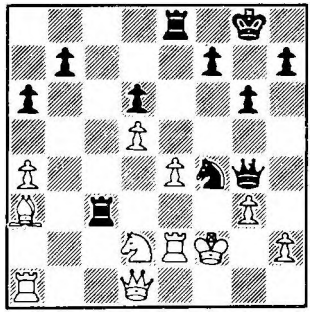
13 B–B1 N–B4, 14 N–Q2 Q–B2, 15 B × P B–R6!

Black threatens 16 ... KN × KP and also eyes the occupation of the many light-colored holes. Alburt must defend carefully.

16 B–B1 B × B, 17 K × B QR–B1, 18 R–K3!? Q–Q2, 19 K–N2 N–N5, 20 R–K2 B × N!, 21 P × B N–Q6

Now 22 P–QB4, trying to hem in the Black aggressors, allows 22 ... KN × BP, 23 R × N Q–R6*ch*! with a killing attack, e.g. 24 K × Q N × R*ch* or 24 K–N1 N × R, 25 K × N Q × RP*ch* and so on. Alburt's next move leads to a forced series of reactions that may have been his only defense.

22 P–B3! R × BP!, 23 P × N Q × NP, 24 B–R3 N–B5*ch*, 25 K–B2



After 25 K–B2

Alburt–deFirmian, 1985

Black might hold the material balance with 25 ... N × R, 26 Q × N Q × Q*ch* and 27 ... P–B4 but he also had to calculate the results of 25 ... Q–R4! which forces 26 P × N and then 26 ... Q × P*ch*. The Black pieces prevail then after 27 K–K1? Q–N8*ch*, 28 N–B1 R–B6, 29 K–Q2 Q–Q5*ch*, 30 K–K1 Q–B6*ch* and 31 ... R × BP but the outcome is unclear after 27 K–B1! Q–R6*ch*, 28 K–B2! (and if 28 ... Q–R5*ch* then 29 K–N1!

31st U.S. Championship, Estes Park, Colorado, October 20–November 7, 1985

	A	B	C	K	F	K	B	D	D	K	S	G	W	M	Totals W	D	L	Points
1. Alburt	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	0	7	5	1	9½–3½
2. Benjamin	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	5	8	0	9–4
3–4. Christiansen	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	4	8	1	8–5
3–4. Kavalek	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	3	10	0	8–5
5–6. Fedorowicz	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	2	10	1	7–6
5–6. Kogan	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	0	½	½	1	2	10	1	7–6
7–8. Browne	0	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	3	7	3	6½–6½
7–8. Dlugy	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	½	½	1	2	9	2	6½–6½
9–11. deFirmian	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	0	X	1	1	1	0	½	3	5	5	5½–7½
9–11. Kudrin	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	2	7	4	5½–7½
9–11. Shirazi	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	1	0	0	X	1	1	1	5	1	7	5½–7½
12–13. Gurevich	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	X	1	½	1	7	5	4½–8½
12–13. Wolff, P.	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	1	0	0	0	X	1	2	5	6	4½–8½
14. McCambridge	1	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	X	1	6	6	4–9

R–R6, 30 N–B1). DeFirmian unexpectedly is overwhelmed by the complications.

25 ... N–R6*ch*?, 26 K–B1!

DeFirmian saw that 26 K–K1 couldn't be played because of 26 ... R × NP and assumed that White had to play 26 K–N2, after which 26 ... N–B5*ch* would repeat the diagrammed position and give him a little more time to calculate his chances. Now he must add fuel to the attacking fire.

26 ... R–B6*ch*, 27 N × R Q × N*ch*, 28 K–K1 Q–B6*ch*

Black's position looks better than it plays. On 28 ... R × P White solves his problems with 29 B–N2! N–B7, 30 R × R!

29 R–Q2 R × P*ch*?

DeFirmian's last chance to make a fight of the game was 29 ... Q–K6*ch*!, so that 30 K–B1 is refuted by 30 ... Q × KP! and 30 Q–K2 is met by the complex 30 ... Q–N8*ch*, 31 Q–B1 R × P*ch*, 32 R–K2 R × R*ch*, 33 K × R Q × P*ch* (and perhaps 34 K–B3? N–N4*ch*, 35 K–B4? Q–Q7*ch* and Black wins).

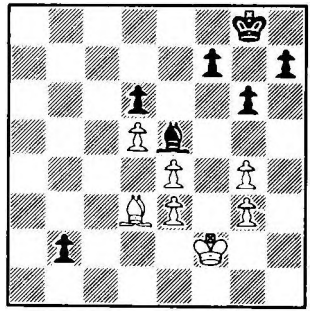
30 K–B1! R–K6, 31 B–N2 Q–B5*ch*, 32 R–K2 P–B3, 33 Q–B2 R × NP!, 34 P × R! and Black resigns

After this blow to Alburt's rivals the scoretable stood: Alburt 8–1, Benjamin 6–3, Christiansen, Kavalek and Boris Kogan 5½–3½. With only four rounds to go, the defending champion could afford to enjoy the view of nearby Rocky Mountain National Park, and coast along. He did just that with 11-move draws against Benjamin, Kavalek and Dlugy (and a messy loss to Vincent McCambridge, who was headed for last place).

Most of the other leaders coasted with him and by tournament's end the standings showed that 26 of the 36 games played among those with plus or even scores had ended in draws. This pacific policy opened up the race for second place. Kavalek extended his record of not having lost in 40 straight championship games but he and Christiansen won only one game apiece in the final week of play. Benjamin finished with a flourish and his final game gave him his first norm towards the grandmaster title.

Queen's Indian Defense
white Browne, *black* Benjamin

1 P-Q4 N-KB3, 2 P-QB4 P-K3, 3 N-KB3 P-QN3, 4 P-QR3 P-B4, 5 P-Q5 B-R3, 6 Q-B2 P × P, 7 P × P P-N3, 8 N-B3 B-KN2, 9 P-KN3 0-0, 10 B-N2 P-Q3, 11 0-0 R-K1, 12 R-K1 QN-Q2, 13 B-B4 Q-K2, 14 P-R3 N-K5!, 15 N × N Q × N, 16 Q-Q2 N-B3, 17 QR-Q1 QR-Q1, 18 N-R2 Q-B5, 19 B-N5 R-QB1, 20 B × N? B × B, 21 N-N4 B-KN2, 22 P-K4 Q-R5!, 23 Q-B4 B-K7!, 24 R-Q2 B × N, 25 P × B B-K4, 26 Q-K3 P-B5, 27 R-QB1 R-B4, 28 R(2)-B2 Q-N6, 29 R × P Q × Q, 30 P × Q B × QNP, 31 R × R NP × R, 32 R-N1 B × P, 33 R-R1 B-N7, 34 R × P B-K4, 35 K-B2 P-B5, 36 B-B1 P-B6, 37 B-Q3 R-N1, 38 R-R2 R-N7*ch*!, 39 R × R P × R and White forfeited



Final position

Browne–Benjamin, 1985

U.S. Championship Summary

Early Matches

1845—Match: Charles Henry Stanley over Eugene Rousseau, 15–8, 8 draws.
1850—Match: Stanley over J.H. Turner, 11–5, one draw.
1857—First American Chess Congress, New York: won by Paul Morphy, who defeated Louis Paulsen in finals.
1871—Second American Chess Congress, Cleveland: won by Capt. George Mackenzie.
1874—Third American Chess Congress, Chicago: won by Mackenzie.
1880—Fifth American Chess Congress, New York: won (in playoff) by Mackenzie.
1890—Match: Jackson Showalter over Solomon Lipschutz.
1891—Match: Lipschutz over Showalter 7–1, draws. (Lipschutz retires as champion.)
1894—Match: Showalter over Albert B. Hodges, 8–6, 4 draws.
1894—Match: Hodges over Showalter, 5–3, 1 draw. (Hodges retires as champion.)
1895—Match: Showalter over Lipschutz, 7–4, 3 draws.
1896—Match: Showalter over Emil Kemeny.
1896—Match: Showalter over John F. Barry, 7–2, 4 draws.
1897—Match: Harry Nelson Pillsbury over Showalter, 10–8, 4 draws.
1898—Match: Pillsbury over Showalter, 7–3, 2 draws.
1906—Pillsbury dies. Showalter subsequently recognized as champion.
1909—Match: Frank J. Marshall over Showalter, 7–2, 3 draws.
1923—Match: Marshall over Edward Lasker, 5–4, 9 draws.

Modern Tournaments

1st—1936 (New York) Sammy Reshevsky, 1st place.
2nd—1938 (New York) Reshevsky.

3rd—1940 (New York) Reshevsky.
4th—1942 (New York) Reshevsky (after playoff with Isaac Kashdan).
5th—1944 (New York) Arnold Denker.
6th—1946 (New York) Reshevsky.
7th—1948 (South Fallsburg, N.Y.) Herman Steiner.
8th—1951 (New York) Larry Evans.
9th—1954 (New York) Arthur Bisguier. Also world championship zonal.
10th—1957–58 (New York) Bobby Fischer. Also zonal.
11th—1958–59 (New York) Fischer.
12th—1959–60 (New York) Fischer.
13th—1960–61 (New York) Fischer. Also zonal.
14th—1961–62 (New York) Evans.
15th—1962–63 (New York) Fischer. Also zonal.
16th—1963–64 (New York) Fischer.
17th—1965 (New York) Fischer. Also zonal.
18th—1966 (New York) Fischer.
19th—1968 (New York) Evans.
20th—1969 (New York) Reshevsky. Also zonal.
21st—1972 (New York) Robert Byrne (after playoff). Also zonal.
22nd—1973 (El Paso, Texas) John Grefe and Lubosh Kavalek co-champions.
23rd—1974 (Chicago) Walter Browne.
24th—1975 (Oberlin, Ohio) Browne. Also zonal.
25th—1977 (Mentor, Ohio) Browne.
26th—1978 (Pasadena, Calif.) Kavalek. Also zonal.
27th—1980 (Greenville, Pa.) Browne, Evans and Larry Christiansen co-champions.
28th—1981 (South Bend, Ind.) Browne and Yasser Seirawan co-champions, also zonal.
29th—1983 (Greenville, Pa.) Browne, Christiansen and Roman Dzhindzhikashvili co-champions.
30th—1984 (Berkeley, Calif.) Lev Alburt. Also zonal.
31st—1985 (Estes Park, Colo.) Alburt.

Matches (after 1936)

1941—Sammy Reshevsky over I.A. "Al" Horowitz, 3–0, 13 draws.
1946—Arnold Denker over Herman Steiner, 3–1, 6 draws.
1952—Larry Evans over Steiner, 8–2, 4 draws.

Individual Records

In the first 31 tournaments to decide the modern (1936 on) United States championship, a number of remarkable records have been achieved:

Most Tournaments Played In

21, Sammy Reshevsky (1936–1981). Followed by Robert Byrne (17), Arthur Bisguier and Pal Benko (16) and Larry Evans (15).

Most Consecutive Tournaments Played In

14, Pal Benko (1958–59 to 1975). Others: Robert Byrne (11, 1958–59 to 1972), Larry Evans and Arthur Bisguier (10).

Most Games Played

(1) Sammy Reshevsky, 269
(2) Robert Byrne, 206
(3) Larry Evans, 193
(4) Pal Benko, 190
(5) Arthur Bisguier, 189
(6) Edmar Mednis, 131
(7) Walter Browne, 120
(8) I.A. Horowitz, 116
(9) Sidney Bernstein, 113
(10) Isaac Kashdan, 99

Most First Prizes

(1) Bobby Fischer, 8
(2) Sammy Reshevsky, 7 (includes two ties)
(3) Walter Browne, 6 (includes three ties)
(4) Larry Evans, 4 (includes one tie)
(5) Lubosh Kavalek, 3 (includes two ties)

Most Plus Scores

(1) Sammy Reshevsky, 21
(2) Larry Evans, 14
(3–4) Robert Byrne, Pal Benko, 10
(5) Bobby Fischer, 8
(6–8) Walter Browne, Arthur Bisguier, William Lombardy, 7
(9–11) Isaac Kashdan, James T. Sherwin, Lubosh Kavalek, 6

Most Finishes in Top Three Places

(1) Sammy Reshevsky, 15
(2) Larry Evans, 9
(3) Bobby Fischer, 8
(4) Walter Browne, 7
(5) Robert Byrne, 6
(6–7) Pal Benko, Lubosh Kavalek, 5
(8–11) Reuben Fine, Isaac Kashdan, James T. Sherwin, Larry Christiansen, 4

Most Games Won

(1) Sammy Reshevsky, 127
(2) Larry Evans, 79
(3) Bobby Fischer, 61
(4) Isaac Kashdan, 58
(5) Robert Byrne, 51
(6) Pal Benko, 49
(7) I.A. Horowitz, 47
(8–10) Arthur Bisguier, Walter Browne, Arnold Denker, 45
(11) Reuben Fine, 41

Most Tournaments Without a Loss

(1) Bobby Fischer, 6
(2–3) Robert Byrne, Sammy Reshevsky, 5
(4) Lubosh Kavalek, 4
(5–6) Larry Evans, Walter Browne, 3

Biggest Margin of Victory

Bobby Fischer, 3½ points (1963–64)

Most Wins, One Tournament

Arnold Denker (1944) and Sammy Reshevsky (1946), 14

Most Draws, One Tournament

Lubosh Kavalek, 15 (1984)

Most Losses, One Tournament

Louis Persinger (1946) and Kamran Shirazi (1984), 16

Most Consecutive Wins

Bobby Fischer, 12, Rd. 11 of 1962–63 to Rd. 11 of 1963–64

Highest Percentage Score (two or more tournaments)

(1) Bobby Fischer, 83.3 percent
(2) Reuben Fine, 78.0 percent
(3) Isaac Kashdan, 71.2 percent
(4) Herman Steiner, 66.6 percent
(5–6) Walter Browne, Lubosh Kavalek, 62.5 percent
(7) A.S. Pinkus, 62.3 percent
(8) Yasser Seirawan, 61.6 percent

(9) Albert C. Simonson, 61.2 percent
(10) Arnold Denker, 60.7 percent

Highest Percentage of Draws (two or more tournaments)

(1) Norman Weinstein, 77.1 percent
(2) Anatoly Lein, 73.9 percent
(3) Lubosh Kavalek, 66.9 percent
(4) Bernard Zuckerman, 66.6 percent
(5) Charles Kalme, 63.7 percent
(6) Fred Reinfeld, 62.5 percent

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